

Across the Plains
in Forty-nine.***

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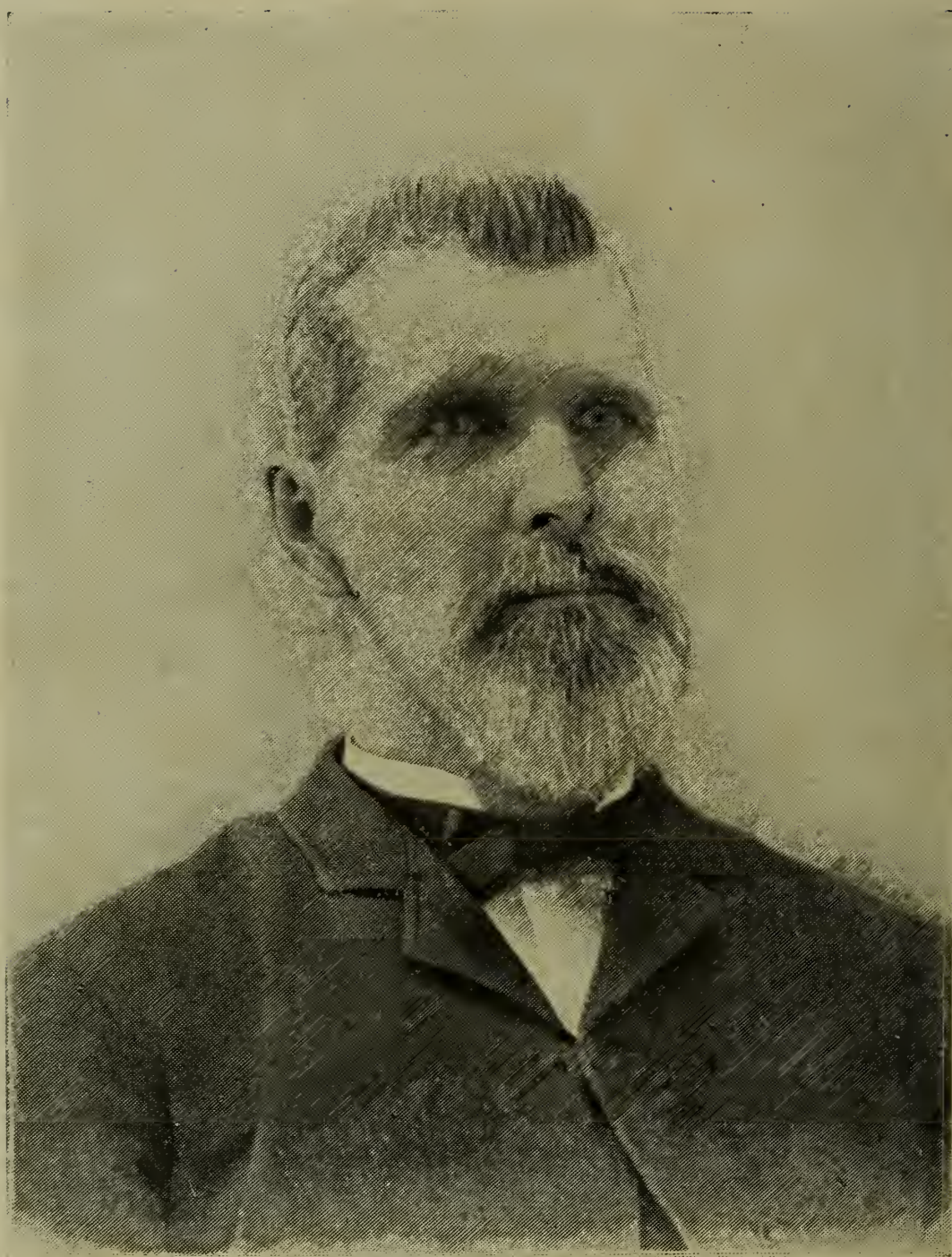
No

Many and all Elders
from
Much Pleasant Share.



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R. C. SHAW.

BOOK THE THIRDS


28

FOR TY-NINE

W. C. HENRY

PRINTED AT THE

OF THE PRESS, N. Y.



H. C. SHAW.

ACROSS THE PLAINS

IN

FORTY-NINE.



BY

R. C. SHAW.



FARMLAND, IND.:
W. C. WEST, PUBLISHER.
1896.

TO KATE A. AND MARY S. THORBURN,
GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN OF THE AUTHOR,
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

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INTRODUCTORY.

At the earnest request of relatives and some of my most intimate friends, I contributed to the Farmland Enterprise, in 1895, a series of articles under the caption of "Across the Plains in Forty-Nine."

As the effort was kindly received by the readers of that popular local journal, and favorably mentioned by those in whose judgment I had confidence, I was again solicited, and finally consented, to revise and publish the same in book form, in order that the reminiscences might the better be preserved by those for whom it was written.

After rounding up seventy years of a very busy life, however, I find myself with im-

paired eyesight and health, leaving me but little strength, and even less inclination, to express myself on paper; therefore this little volume makes no pretensions to literary merit.

I have endeavored to describe nature as I saw it, and, in a commonplace way, give a brief account of the perils and pleasures which I, and those who were associated with me, experienced during an overland journey from Boston to California in 1849.

To those who court adventure, and love to view from lofty mountain heights the wonders of primeval things, it may prove interesting; while to those who care less for the grandeur and beauty of nature it will probably be of little interest.

CHAPTER I.

Discovery of Gold in California—The Resulting Fever and the Remedy—Formation of Companies for the New Eldorado—The Grand Exodus by Land and Sea—Dangers of an Overland Journey.

I have often been solicited by my friends to give a brief account of my travels and adventures while crossing the plains to California in 1849, through a country where Indians held full sway, and who were known to be very hostile and extremely jealous of all white men who should dare venture within their boundaries; across a region of beautiful prairies, noble rivers, majestic mountains, deep, dark and impassable canyons, dry and barren deserts, vast fields of wild sage, snow-capped peaks, ancient volcanic craters and lava fields, hot and

boiling springs, beautiful parks, valleys and lakes, and where seem gathered together the *mightiest monuments* of the world's great wonders.

By referring back to 1849, we find all the vast region lying between the Missouri river and the Pacific ocean uninhabited, except by roving bands of Indians, whose habits and modes of life were as little known as was the character of the country which they occupied.

But few white men, at the time of which we write, had ever ventured beyond the fertile rolling prairies, forming the eastern portions of what are now the great States of Kansas and Nebraska.

Fremont, by order of the United States Government in 1842, explored the country along the line of the Kansas and Nebraska rivers as far as the South Pass, climbing the mountain peak which bears his name, and returned the same season.

Later explorations conducted by Fremont,

in which he suffered untold hardships and the loss, by starvation, of all his animals and a large part of his men, resulted in nothing, except as to the geography of the country traversed, and to confirm the opinion at that time entertained that the whole area lying west of the Missouri river was a barren waste, destitute of everything that contributes to the wants of civilized man.

In 1845, a resolution was offered in the U. S. Senate by Hon. Thomas H. Benton, providing for an appropriation of \$50,000 to enable Fremont to continue his explorations. The Senate refused to adopt the resolution, giving as a reason that it was a barren country and not worth the money. Here, then, was a country of vast extent—more than forty times as large as the State of Indiana—owned by and lying in sight of the most progressive nation on earth, yet our representatives in Congress, only fifty years ago, considered it as being almost worthless.

In 1847, the Mormons commenced their migrations to Salt Lake, in what is now the State of Utah, which, in view of the barren and forbidding aspect of the country, they named Deserett. Here they supposed themselves to be out of the territory of the United States, beyond the reach of interference by any other government, and left to pursue their peculiar religious rites in their own way.

At the close of the Mexican war, in 1848, Utah, together with New Mexico, Nevada and California, were ceded by Mexico to the United States, and, subsequently, Arizona was acquired by purchase.

These new acquisitions, containing over one million square miles, when added to former possessions, formed a vast mountain region about fifteen hundred miles square, which was traversed by two high mountain ranges running north and south through its entire length. Between the mountain barriers lies the great basin, or Salt Lake valley, into which rivers

and streams of considerable size flow from the mountains, where they sink or are lost in the desert sands, as no outlet for them has ever been discovered.

This great basin was described by Fremont as being six hundred miles wide, eight hundred miles long and elevated above the sea about five thousand feet. It is surrounded by lofty mountains and, though the interior was almost unknown, was believed to contain rivers and lakes which had no communication with the sea. It was also supposed to contain unexplored deserts and oases, and savage tribes which had never been seen or described by civilized man.

Later explorations proved it to be almost destitute of vegetable or animal life. It being of volcanic origin, there were found long stretches of ashes of an unknown depth, and also extensive lava fields, where vegetation failed to find an abiding place.

Prior to the time of which we write, advent-

urous hunters and trappers had plied their vocation along the line of the Missouri river to its source in the mountains, there striking the head waters of the Columbia and following that stream to the trading posts of the American Fur Company on the Pacific coast, where they squandered the proceeds from the sale of their peltries in riotous living, returning the next season over the same route to St. Louis, where they spent the winter as hail fellows well met. They traveled in parties of three or more, in order to better protect themselves from hostile Indians. Their rifles furnished them with food and they slept under the stars without shelter, enjoying perfect health in the pure mountain air, and were never so happy as when fraternizing with, or fighting, Indians.

Their trapping expeditions were both profitable and enjoyable, and, with proper economy, they should have become wealthy, but an ingenious somebody (whose name is lost to his-

tory), about the year 1846; discovered that silk could be used for covering hats, and the occupation of the trapper was gone forever; but, being bold hunters, skilled in woodcraft and conversant with the habits of Indians, besides having some knowledge of the dialect of the different tribes, their services were in demand as guides and hunters by parties while crossing the plains in 1849, and they were eager to avail themselves of any opportunity of going to California on a free pass.

Gold was discovered on the American river in California by Thomas W. Marshall on the 19th of January, 1848.

The news of that important event reached the Atlantic coast, by the way of Cape Horn, in September following, but the glowing accounts were not verified until January, 1849—one year from the date of the discovery of the precious metal.

By this time nuggets and specimens of gold were on exhibition in show windows; fabulous

accounts were given of fortunes made in a day—of renegade Mexicans riding half-wild horses to the mountains, picking out chunks of gold with their bowie-knives and returning to Mexico laden with wealth.

The Digger Indians, the lowest of created beings, were represented as having thrown away their arrows and filling their quivers with gold dust.

Sailors on the Pacific coast deserted their vessels for the new Eldorado. Ships were fitted out from Atlantic ports in the least possible time for a voyage of fifteen thousand miles around Cape Horn to California, and they were crowded with passengers.

The California fever of '49 was raging in all its fury, and the only remedy seemed to be a change of climate with the least possible delay.

As the reports of the wonderful discovery of gold were fully confirmed, everybody became excited. Merchants closed out their

business, clerks left their employers, mechanics packed their tools, lawyers gave up their practice, preachers bade adieu to their flocks and all joined the grand procession.

Over twenty thousand persons left Boston for California in '49—a large majority of them by water. While the voyage around Cape Horn by water could be made with comparative safety, a journey across the plains was thought to be extremely hazardous; yet, in view of prospective wealth, coupled with a love of adventure and a desire to see and explore the mysteries of the unknown West, there were many who were willing to take the risk.

Up to the first day of November, 1849, about five hundred vessels, each containing more or less passengers besides their crews, had arrived at San Francisco within the preceding year, and there were at that time upwards of two hundred vessels on their way from Atlantic ports.

The Mount Washington Mining Company, of which the writer was a member, was organized and incorporated, under the laws of Massachusetts, March 10th, 1849, and consisted of fifty members, the greater part of whom were residents of Boston and vicinity, though New Hampshire and Vermont were represented, each by two stalwart members.

Dr. J. N. Haynes, a wealthy physician of twenty years' practice, joined us and volunteered his services as surgeon to our party. His motive in crossing the plains was to gratify his love of adventure and intense desire to travel in wild and unknown regions, where he could observe nature in all her majesty and wildness, while yet unshorn of its beauty by the hand of man, and, as he humorously expressed it, to enjoy a season of rest from his labors.

Applicants for membership in our company were subjected to rigid examination by the surgeon and many rejected on account of

physical disability; yet it is a noteworthy fact that those who seemed the most robust and, to all appearances, best able to battle with the hardships of the journey, were the first to succumb to disease and death.

Joseph Thing, an old-time hunter and trapper of the mountains, who, in his wanderings, had crossed the plains many times along the usual route of the trappers, was engaged as guide for our company. His amiable disposition, his experience in mountain life, and his knowledge of Indian character and of the dialect of many of the tribes made him a valuable acquisition to our numbers.

By the advice of our guide, we determined to cross the plains with saddle-horses and pack-mules, for by this method we could more readily ford rivers, select camping places in isolated grassy spots, navigate among rocks and through canyons, climb and wind around steep mountain sides and through timber where it would be quite impossible for

wagoners to make their way, while with a less elaborate outfit we expected to make better time than by any other mode of travel.

Before leaving Boston we secured for our journey such supplies as we supposed could not be readily obtained on the frontier.

Our company was composed of men from many different walks in life, among them lawyers, doctors, preachers, teachers, students, merchants, clerks and mechanics. The larger number of them were in the prime of their manhood, though several students from institutions of learning were but little past their majority.

The mystery attached to the country which we were to traverse, the novelty of the undertaking, the prospect of lively adventure and, in some cases, the benefits that were expected to be derived from a change from the counting-room to life in the open air seemed to be the primary incentives to their crossing the plains.

While we formed the only company which left Boston by the overland route, many other organized companies purchased and fitted out ships and took their chances of an ocean voyage of about fifteen thousand miles around Cape Horn.

The Edward Everett, a fine ship, left Boston about ten days before the date of our departure, with a company of three hundred men, besides her crew of twenty officers and sailors. I had seriously thought of joining the party, for among its members were a number of my acquaintances; but, learning that a company was being organized to cross the plains, I abandoned all thoughts of a long ocean voyage, which promised nothing but threadbare adventure, with but little of mystery or novelty.

I may here digress and briefly give the reader something about the perils and pleasures experienced by the passengers of a noble ship.

The Edward Everett was nearly new and one of the finest ships of her time, while she

was furnished with all the improved appliances of the age, and her owners were complimented on their choice of so fine a vessel.

After leaving Boston, nothing worthy of mention occurred, except rough weather and much sea sickness among those who were unaccustomed to ocean voyages, until they reached the southern coast of Patagonia, in midwinter, and attempted to pass through the straits of Magellan, which was always considered a dangerous undertaking for sailing ships, even in summer.

Here they were beset by adverse winds and currents, and finally abandoned all hope of forcing their ship through the straits, making the best of their way around Cape Horn in about sixty degrees of south latitude, encountering terrible gales, extreme cold, dense fogs, snow and ice.

On reaching the calmer waters of the Pacific, it was discovered that many of the passengers were in the incipient stages of scurvy,

which necessitated their entering the port of Valparaiso for supplies of fruit and vegetables.

The ship finally arrived at San Francisco, after a voyage lasting five and a half months, with a very debilitated lot of passengers.

I have many times congratulated myself because of the fact that I was not one of the passengers of the good ship Edward Everett.

CHAPTER II.

Off for California by Rail, River and Pack-Mule—Seventeen Days from Boston to Independence—Camping Among the Oaks—Seven of Our Party Die of Cholera—A Long Delay—Breaking Mules—A Ten-Dollar Ambulance—On the Trail—Horses Stolen by Thieves—A Discouraging Outlook—Mode of Travel.

After many vexatious delays, we left Boston on the 17th of April by Boston and Albany railway, thence by New York Central, arriving in Buffalo forty hours from Boston. After waiting three days, during which time we visited Niagara Falls, we boarded a lake steamer for Sandusky; thence by rail to Cincinnati, and next by river steamer down the Ohio and up the Mississippi to St. Louis,

where we changed boats for Council Bluffs on the Missouri; but, learning that the animals required for our journey could not be obtained at that place, we decided to make Independence, Mo., our starting point, arriving there on the third day of May.

After selecting the shortest and most direct route and improving all available opportunities for speed, we were seventeen days in making the distance from Boston to Independence, bringing in striking contrast the facilities for travel at the present time which the traveler can not fail to appreciate, for now, in the most luxurious cars on the best equipped railroads in the world, the anxious traveler is hurried along at the rate of fifty miles an hour, and reaches Independence from Boston in twice as many hours as we were days in covering the same distance. But at that time—only forty-seven years ago—there were no railroads or telegraphic lines reaching the Mississippi, and mails hadn't yet crossed the Missouri.

The third day from St. Louis we landed on the bank of the Missouri and buried two of the boat's crew, who had died of cholera, and, on the night before reaching Independence, Nathan Watkins, one of our party, died of the same disease and was buried near the landing.

We formed our camp in a fine grove of young oaks about two miles south of the river, and here we were destined to remain for more than forty days, during which time we had thirteen cases of cholera and four deaths.

It is remarkable that, notwithstanding the depressing circumstances under which we were laboring and the gloomy prospects of the future, not one of our party was disposed to abandon the enterprise and return home.

While some of our men were caring for the sick, others were scouring the country for mules and horses to complete our outfit, for we were anxious to vacate the camp where cholera seemed to spring from the ground.

We found the buying of such animals as was required in that sparsely settled country a difficult task, as the supply near at hand had been exhausted by parties making an earlier start, and they were only to be found after canvassing a large area of territory, which necessitated long rides.

Many of the mules purchased had seen service in the Mexican war, and, though poor in flesh, having been wintered without care or shelter, they proved to be the most serviceable animals in our train.

There were also mules in our outfit which had never been handled, and in breaking them to saddle and pack many valiant riders found themselves in very undignified positions. A number of our mules were never thoroughly subdued until reaching the alkali region, by which time they had worn themselves out and became food for coyotes.

While the sick were convalescing, our camp presented a bustling scene, all being occupied

in completing the arrangements for our journey in the wilderness. As it was evident that at least two of our men would be unable to take to the saddle for several days, and they being very desirous of changing locations, the doctor suggested an ambulance. We therefore purchased the running-gear of an old spring wagon, which had seen many years of hard service and been thrown aside as worthless, though the owner made it appear very cheap at ten dollars. With a little rough lumber picked up at the landing, hickory bows worked out with a dull ax, heavy muslin for a covering, a liberal supply of hay cut with a sheath-knife, and an old horse and harness that a Gypsy might envy, we had a vehicle in which the sick could ride with comfort and of which the boys were quite proud.

This forced delay might have proved fatal to our undertaking. We were warned by old frontiersmen of the danger of making so late a start, being told that the small streams would

be dried up by the middle of summer, and that we might expect to find water only after long marches, in camping places where grass and fuel had been consumed by the immense number of travelers in advance of us.

It was represented to us that on the approach of the rainy season in California, which set in about the first of September, vast quantities of snow would fall in the mountains and that it would be quite impossible for us to get through them. We were also reminded of the fate of Fremont and his party when caught in the snows of the Sierra-Nevada mountains in 1846. While these warnings may have increased our anxiety to some extent, yet there was no thought of abandoning our cherished enterprise.

After an early breakfast on the 10th of June, having had no new cases of cholera for several days, we packed up for a start into the wilderness, and yet it was high noon before we succeeded in forcing some of the fractious

mules to take their packs out of the camp where we had been so long delayed.

The first night out we camped in detachments along the bank of a small creek, the foremost mess having made about fifteen miles, while those in the rear were not more than five or six miles out, and in this way we traveled for several days, by which time our mules became somewhat sobered, and we then traveled and camped in a body. Our mules, after being packed, were turned loose and driven along by the guards.

The eighth day out we crossed the Kansas river at a ford about one hundred miles from Independence and camped for the night on the north bank, where five of our best horses were reported missing the next morning. The most of the day was spent in pursuit of the animals, but they were never found, though we obtained the best of evidence that they were stolen by white men.

Having lost five horses and being about to

enter the country of the Pawnee Indians, we began to see the necessity of a more thorough organization, and at a meeting of the company our guide was elected commander-in-chief, all agreeing to abide by such rules as he saw fit to adopt, and we soon found ourselves in complete working order. Our guide was at once dubbed "General," and he retained the title to the day of his death, which occurred several years later. Guards were arranged for both night and day. Each man was assigned his duties and was expected to execute them with promptness. Powder and lead were distributed to all; instructions given as to the care of our fire-arms, with orders to keep them loaded and ready for any emergency; and we were also exercised at target practice.

On June 22d we were crossing a beautiful prairie, between the Kansas and Platte rivers, and were making excellent time; but just as we had selected our camp for the night one of the rear guards came in and reported

two of our men, Professor Nye and D. W. Hinckley, stricken with cholera five miles behind and lay dying by the wayside.

This intelligence struck our camp like a thunderbolt, for we were congratulating ourselves on being done with cholera; but here was the prospect of losing two more of our esteemed members and of another long delay. Owing to this disease we were already forty or fifty days behind, and, as the game had been driven from the road by earlier hunters, our supplies were being rapidly consumed, and we were liable to be caught in the early snows on the mountains, making the outlook, to say the least, very discouraging.

Five of our comrades had previously become the prey of this dread disease, and yet, like a sleuth-hound, it was still pursuing us. But there was no time to indulge in regrets.

The doctor and four men started back at once to the aid and support of our sick brothers, taking along the packs which belonged to

them, as their pack-mules had been driven into the main camp. The other members of the mess to which the sick men belonged had remained with them.

Medical treatment, sympathy and brotherly care proved of no avail. Both patients passed into a state of collapse before midnight and died early next morning.

Their bodies were laid out in clean clothes, after which they were sewed up in their blankets, and at high twelve buried in one grave, over which (utilizing the rocks in the vicinity) we erected a neat and substantial cairn.

The main camp having been notified early in the morning of passing events, and, acting on the advice of the doctor, who wished to keep the men from brooding over the past, it was arranged for the company to travel this day the same as usual, and for those in the rear, after burying the dead, to join the main body at night.

After performing the last sad rites over the grave of our lamented comrades and burning all the clothing in which they had died, we packed up and were on the road by 2 o'clock p. m., intending to reach the main camp without a halt.

Being one of the party, I was requested to ride the bell-horse for the pack-mules to follow, to which I readily assented; and it is possible that my anxiety to change locations from where the very air seemed thick with despondency, and the lonely position in which I was placed (being far in the lead), had something to do with the excellent speed made, as we arrived in camp, thirty miles away, before dark, demonstrating the fact that a mule could make six or seven miles an hour under a two-hundred-pound pack.

The sudden death of these two members of our party cast a gloom over our camp, and their taking off was deeply lamented. Professor Nye was about forty-five years of age

and a gentleman in the truest sense. He had been teaching for more than twenty consecutive years. He was a very enthusiastic botanist and anticipated much enjoyment from a journey across the plains. D. W. Hinckley was probably twenty-one or twenty-two years of age, and a nephew of Professor Nye. He had just rounded up four years of college life, and undertook this journey at the solicitation of his uncle, who agreed to pay all the expenses of his trip. That both should be stricken with cholera at the same time and die within a few minutes of each other was beyond our comprehension.

Our company was divided into seven messes of six men each. The messes were known by numbers, and the members of each mess were assigned their duties, both while in camp and on the road. Each man was provided with a horse or mule to ride, and also a mule to carry his pack, which contained his wearing apparel, provisions, etc. We also had extra pack-

mules—one in the care of each mess. One of them was packed with pork, another with rice, another with beans, another with ammunition, another with the medicine chest and two with navy bread. These mules had pet names. They were known as "Pigtail," "Chinaman," "Beanpod," "Powder-Horn," "Pill-Bags" and "Cracker-Boxes."

Our mode of travel was as follows: We were aroused at early daybreak, the animals turned loose to graze, and breakfast was prepared and eaten with appetites that epicures might envy. At six o'clock the General and members of one mess, forming the advance guard, left camp and were generally one or two miles in advance of the main body. They were always on the lookout for Indians and game, and it was their duty to select the places for the noon halts and also for camping at night. The mules being packed and ready for the road, another mess of six men (one of them riding the bell-horse) moved out, and

the pack-mules were driven after them. Two other messes took their stations—one on each flank to keep the mules in line—while the three remaining messes brought up the rear in three sections. If a mule threw his pack or got it misplaced, the first rear section took him in hand, adjusted his load and rushed him into the drove—the second section taking the place of the first, which fell in the rear.

It will be seen that by this method the members of each mess were always together and working in company, and that in the course of seven days they filled all the stations from the advance to rear guard in turn. The doctor, who was an excellent hunter, by common consent always formed one of the advance guard, which gave him a better opportunity to study geology and botany. He was often accused of breaking ranks and exploring the hills in order, as he said, “to find specimens to balance the pack on his mule.”

In order to guard against accidents when on

steep grades, our riding and pack-saddles were furnished with strong breast-straps, cruppers and very wide leather girths. Our animals were also provided with ropes about twenty-five feet long, with iron pickets attached, with which to tether them in any desired location.

Packs were held in place on the mules by strong surcingles, and, in addition to them, we used lash-ropes twenty feet long; yet, with all the precaution we were able to take, it was three or four weeks after leaving the frontier before our wild mules acknowledged themselves conquered and ceased dumping their packs along the road.

Our riding saddles were of the kind called at that time the naked Spanish tree. They were without pads of any kind, but very light and strong. A sweat-cloth and blanket, folded to the proper size and placed on the back of the horse, formed the pad, and a blanket above the saddle, secured by a strong surcingle, formed the seat.

A becket, attached to the horn of the saddle for carrying a gun, and small waterproof holsters for revolvers and ammunition, completed the outfit.

Our saddle pads were the only blankets we had to protect us from the chilly mountain air during the night, and though at times they were sadly in need of being laundered, I think we slept none the less on that account.

CHAPTER III.

Signs of Buffalo—Indian Mail Carriers—A Significant Notice—A Terrible Storm—Loss of the Ambulance—Prairie Dogs—The Platte River—Buffalo Meat—Target Practice—The Trappers' Fireplace—Fuel for Cooking—Fourth of July—Chimney Rock—Canyons of the Platte—Scotts Bluffs—Hunting on Ash Creek.

On June 24th, signs of Buffalo having been seen for a day or two, the advance guard, which was composed of the hunters of the company, started out before sunrise with the view of finding the game while grazing in the valleys, it being the habit of these animals to retreat to the hills and spend the heat of the day. Light guns were exchanged for those better adapted to taking large game, and there

was also some temporary swapping of horses before the squad set out with high hopes of success.

While traveling up a narrow belt of timber which skirted a small stream, we were surprised at having a number of deer break through our train on their way to the prairie. The excitement and shooting which followed their appearance resulted in only crippling one of our mules so seriously that the animal had to be shot and left to the coyotes.

Near nightfall, after a march of about twenty-five miles, we overtook the enthusiastic hunters, and there were eight weary, half-starved men, they not having had a particle of food since early morning. Nor had they seen a buffalo, or even a jack-rabbit.

On June 25th, we had a succession of rolling prairies and deep, miry streams, one of which was quite difficult to cross. Two of our wild pack-mules mired, stuck fast and gave up to die; but, with a rope about the neck, they

were pulled out more dead than alive, and the ordeal seemed to have changed their dispositions, as after their mud bath they became very tame and gentle.

During the noon halt we were visited by three Sioux hunters—the first Indians seen on our march. They had been on a hunting expedition along the Loup river, and, having met with very indifferent success, were returning to their camp with a very small quantity of dried venison, which they carried on their riding ponies. They eagerly accepted an invitation to take dinner with us, and became very friendly, seeming pleased to learn that the General was able to converse with them in their own tongue. They were fairly good-looking Indians, though their clothing was extremely abbreviated.

It was ascertained that the chief Indian (or the one who seemed to be the leader of the party) had, at some previous time, visited Council Bluffs, and the General suggested that

possibly, for a consideration, they might be induced to take letters for us to some trading-post on the Missouri, and there left to take chances of reaching their destination by whatever conveyance might be found. The proposition was favorably received by most of the company, the Indians promising to deliver the letters to some trader at Council Bluffs, or at a place then called Chouteau's Landing.

The General entertained but little doubt as to the favorable outcome of the project, and many of our party availed themselves of the opportunity of writing to their friends in the East, while others had no faith in the venture, but in time learned that an excellent chance had been frittered away.

It was suggested that the letters, when completed, should be made up in a package, and that the General negotiate with the Indians for carrying them; but the Chief, having an eye to the "main chance," objected to such an arrangement. He looked upon the matter as

a retail business, and proposed to strike the best possible bargain with each letter-writer separately. He seemed to know nothing about a wholesale, spot-cash deal, with a per cent. off, but was determined to make the most of the opportunity.

While he did not seem to be anxious for money, there was nothing else in our outfit but what he was willing to take, and at the final settlement quite a quantity of second-hand clothing, notions, tobacco and jewelry changed hands, and the Indians generally got whatever they fancied. Nothing less than a calico shirt, of the pattern like I was then wearing, appeared to them to be of the proper value for carrying my letter. The Indians got the shirt, and several months later I had the satisfaction of knowing that my wife received the letter.

Our leading Indian, when dressed in a blue calico shirt, with a wide navy collar; a pair of antiquated pants, which were about ten inches

too short for his long legs; new and bright-colored suspenders, which he insisted on crossing in front; a red ribbon for a necktie, with bare head and naked feet, looked the prince of dudes. The other two Indians were not so elaborately dressed, but, comparing their outfit with the raiment in which they were introduced to us, they made a very good appearance.

The letters were finally made up in a package and directed to Boston, with a note attached requesting any one into whose hands it might fall to forward eastward at the first convenient opportunity, and it was the middle of the afternoon when the three proud Sioux Indians set out on the first mail route ever established in what is now the great State of Nebraska.

The fact that the letters reached their destination proved that the trio of hunters (though full-blood Sioux Indians) were faithful to their trust, while in what way or by

whom our letters, after leaving the hands of the Indians, were forwarded to St. Louis post-office will probably never be known.

After a hard day's work, we camped on the bluffs of a shallow stream bordered with timber, where, posted on a large tree, was found the following:

"NOTICE.—We camped here on the 10th day of May. Jim Lider went up the creek to hunt deer and never came back. We found his dead body two miles up the creek after two days' hunt, his scalp, clothes and gun all gone. The Pawnees did it. Look out for the red devils.

JOHN SLADE,

Captain Otter Creek Co."

June 26th was extremely hot and sultry, and the march was very tedious and fatiguing. While preparing the camp for the night on the steep bluff of a timberless creek, we noticed a heavy bank of clouds in the west and could hear the ominous roll of distant thunder, indicative of a terrible storm.

Supper was hastily eaten and everything made snug for the night. The animals were secured to their pickets, the guards assigned their beats, and by this time the storm had found us.

We were treated to a grand display of electricity and the heaviest of thunder, while the rain seemed to vie with the wind in trying to see which could do the most damage and make us the most uncomfortable.

Tents offered but little protection from the storm, for, in spite of us, they were blown down and, together with the blankets, clothing and cooking utensils, strewn about the prairie and many articles never found.

The ambulance, in which two of the men had taken refuge, was hurled down the steep bluff, tumbling the occupants out as it descended, and landed in the river a total wreck.

It is almost unnecessary to state that we passed a sleepless night, shivering with cold, and were glad to see daylight.

It was 2 o'clock p. m. the next day before everything was gotten in shape to resume the journey. The weather being cool and delightful after the storm, the march was very interesting, as en route there was a succession of broad prairies, immense boulders, deep streams and sandy plains, which were completely honey-combed by prairie-dogs.

After thirty miles travel the Platte was sighted, and two miles down the bluffs and across a fine bottom brought us to the river, where a feast awaited our arrival, the hunters having killed a fine buffalo cow and yearling calf, which they had neatly dressed and cut up ready for cooking; also had gathered chips for fuel, and in a very short time the air was laden with an appetizing odor.

It is somewhat remarkable that, in traveling the distance from the Missouri river to the Sacramento, no dense forests were discovered. With the exception of isolated cottonwood trees and small brush along the water-

courses, but little timber was seen east of the Sweet Water, while at the base and on the lower slopes of the Wind River and Sierra-Nevada mountains were scattering oaks and pines of low, spreading growth, with a stunted mass of brush near the timber line, while along the margin of the mountain streams were several varieties of willow, the larger of which the beaver built his dam, while using the bark of the smaller varieties for his winter food.

On reaching the Platte, the General informed us that for three hundred miles along the river we should not find a particle of timber, and that the cooking would have to be done over a fire made from buffalo chips (the dried excrement of the buffalo), which, when used in the trapper's fireplace, proved a very satisfactory fuel.

For the benefit of the reader, I will briefly explain the manner in which the fireplace, or oven, of the trapper was constructed, when

using buffalo chips as fuel along the Platte.

Selecting a spot a short distance from the steep river bank, a hole about six inches in diameter and eight to twelve inches deep was excavated. An air tunnel was then formed by forcing a ramrod horizontally from the river bank to the bottom of the cavity, giving the oven the required draught. In making a fire (after gathering a quantity of dry chips, which were found in abundance), a wisp of dry grass was lighted and placed at the bottom of the oven, opposite the air tunnel, feeding the flame with finely pulverized dry chips, which readily ignited. Then, after filling the fireplace with broken chips and placing around the oven two or three small rocks, on which to rest the cooking utensils, we had a combination which at first gave us a grand surprise, as but little smoke and only slight odor emitted from the fire, and we found, after having eaten our first meal cooked in this manner, that the prejudice previously entertained against buffalo

chips as a fuel had vanished into "thin air."

The Platte river at this point was over a half-mile wide, but had only about two feet of water at the deepest places. Quicksand formed the bed of the stream, into which our animals sank rapidly, but they soon learned to keep in motion while drinking from it.

The river valley, extending from one to three miles on either side, was composed of a rich, sandy loam, on which was growing the most luxuriant grasses and a great variety of flowering plants. The river bottoms were bordered by high and broken sand-bluffs, which presented a very barren appearance, and there was no timber in sight of our camp—not even a willow.

We were between three and four hundred miles on our journey, but no white men, except those of our own party, had been seen. It seemed that we were the sole occupants of that vast wilderness.

We passed many villages of prairie-dogs,

and found the little animals quite interesting, but very shy. The Doctor, with all his skill as a marksman, failed to capture a specimen.

We crossed the south fork of the Platte by fording. The treacherous quicksand kept the mules in constant motion, and they needed no urging when once started across.

About the middle of the river we found an abandoned wagon sticking fast in the quicksand. The covering had been removed from the bows, and the wheels were almost wholly submerged, while the bed was quietly resting on the bottom in nearly a foot of water. Though the south fork is very wide, there was not more than twenty inches of water in the deepest places.

Between the two rivers, above the junction, are thousands of acres of black, sandy soil, on which grew the finest of grasses and also several varieties of cactus, of which the prickly-pear predominated.

We had gained about two thousand feet in

altitude since leaving our old camp on the Missouri.

The fourth of July was ushered in by the discharge of our firearms, and, after a thorough cleaning, they were ready for use again.

We made satisfactory progress up the north fork of the Platte, and as a higher altitude was reached the river became very narrow and rapid, and where it cut through high ridges it formed very deep canyons. The animals found excellent grazing, the road was as good as could have been desired, and the weather fine, with hot days and cool nights. All of us enjoyed good health, and, barring anxiety as to the future and the scarcity of game, the daily marches to the most of the company were quite enjoyable.

Chimney rock, situated as it is on a level plain midway between the north fork of the Platte and the lofty sandhills which border the wide river bottom, is an object of interest to all lovers of the grand in nature. In the

clear atmosphere peculiar to that region it can be seen forty miles away. At this distance it looks like a chimney of some great factory. At a distance of fifteen or twenty miles it appears to the eye as a smooth, perpendicular shaft. On arriving in the vicinity of the rock there was found a large, symmetrical mound, covering more than an acre of ground and about one hundred feet high, from the center of which the rock reached a height estimated to be one hundred and eighty feet. The rock, being composed of a soft, gray sandstone, was fast wearing away and adding its waste to the mound below. It was fifty or sixty feet in diameter at the base, and carried its size well to the top. Altogether, it was a rough, ragged pile, and struck one as being, more grand than beautiful.

Fifteen or twenty miles from Chimney rock, we came to a high ridge, through which the Platte, in its fight for the right of way, had formed a canyon five or six hundred feet

deep, and the rushing waters were still battling with the rocks which had fallen from the canyon's walls.

Fremont was instructed by the Government to explore and survey the Platte river, on his return from the first exploring expedition to the Rocky mountains, and for that purpose he was provided with an excellent rubber boat, which he transported from St. Louis to the mouth of the Sweet Water, where it was left while he penetrated and explored the Wind River mountains. In his party were several Canadian voyagers. They were employed because of the fact that they were known to be experienced boatmen and experts in navigating tortuous streams.

On the return of the party to the Sweet Water, the boat was launched and the voyage down the Platte commenced. It was found to be a foaming torrent from the start, and the boatmen were shot down the rocky channel with the speed of a race-horse. After three or

four hours of difficult and dangerous boating, without, as yet, meeting with serious accident, they entered this canyon, where their boat was completely wrecked, the boatmen barely escaping with their lives. Much other valuable property was also lost, including records and field notes, surveying and astronomical instruments, besides geological and botanical collections, which had been gathered with much labor and great care, and were of almost priceless value.

It would seem to require but little statesmanship for those in authority to sit in a cozy office at Washington and order Fremont to navigate and survey a river of which they knew nothing.

Having made camp early in the afternoon, near a spring of cool water which was gushing from the base of a high cliff, we had an opportunity of visiting the sandstone formations at that time called Scotts Bluffs, only a mile or two from camp, and were amply paid for the

time spent, for among them, with a little stretch of the imagination, could have been found the counterpart of everything in ancient or modern architecture, and on a most stupendous scale. There seemed to be immense buildings, with terraces, domes, turrets and pinnacles, and a bewildering labyrinth of streets, alleys and broad avenues, the whole forming a veritable city done in soft sandstone.

Where the wind had full sweep, sand-dunes were formed, the outlines and artistic curves of which were very interesting; and the innumerable scales of mica mixed with the sand glistened in the sunlight and added beauty to the scene.

In the clear atmosphere of that locality one is easily deceived as to heights and measurements, and we indulged in much wild guessing relative to the height of some of the vertical walls of the larger formations, which were probably from three to five hundred feet high.

I doubt whether there could be found a

cleaner spot in the world, for there was not a trace of vegetation to be seen, and the point visited by us was as clean as pure gray sand could make it.

Ash creek, a tributary to the Platte, passes through a deep canyon which the road crossed by a steep and difficult trail. Making a noon halt in the narrow valley, four of us, including the Doctor, obtained leave of absence for an hour to give us an opportunity to examine the formation of this wonderful water-course.

The General informed us that the shady nooks along the creek were favorite retreats for deer in the heat of the day, and advised us to carry our guns without covers and ready for immediate use.

After a half-mile or more of climbing and winding among rocks, we found on the east side of the creek a perpendicular wall of soft sandstone about four hundred feet high, in which deep caverns had been worn by the action of water on the more friable portions of

the rock. The bank on the west side at this point was quite sloping, while shrubs were growing wherever their roots could obtain a foothold. We halted in the shade of the rock wall, and, while deeply interested in surrounding objects, were startled by a peculiar rushing sound from up the creek which seemed to be drawing nearer. We first thought of mounted Indians, but, before we had time to take the second thought, six deer, with a very large buck in the lead, were within fifty feet of us, with nothing intervening except low, scrubby bushes. On seeing us, they changed their course and started up the opposite slope, when our four guns, heavily charged with buckshot, were all fired at once, and the old buck came tumbling down the steep bank almost to our feet, while we were surprised and dumbfounded at seeing the other five deer scamper off up the hill quite unhurt. In dressing the game we noticed that its hide was completely riddled with

buckshot, and on consulting together we found that in our hurry and excitement all had fired at that tough old buck and let the young and tender meat go scot-free.

CHAPTER IV.

Hunting Buffalo—Chased by Indians—The Tables Turned—Buffalo Hunters Unhorsed—Wild Sage—Rocky Hills—Rough Roads—Throwing Away Tents and Tools—Rock Independence—Devil's Gate—A New Departure.

Benjamin Snow, an excellent shot and a persistent hunter, was off for the hills long before daylight on a stillhunt for buffalo. Before our train was ready for the road, he returned and reported the capture of a fine cow only a short distance away. My mess was detailed to go with Snow and secure the meat. There were seven of us in the party; and, in addition to our riding animals, we took along four pack-mules with game

pouches, having had orders to take the meat to our noon halting place.

A mile up the road and a short distance into the hills brought us to the game. We were but a short time divesting our prize of its jacket and packing everything eatable on the mules, being anxious to overtake our train as soon as possible, for fear of being cut off from the company by the hostile Sioux Indians.

Turner, one of our party, was detailed to hold the horses and keep a sharp lookout, as we always had done when in detached parties. When we were ready to leave, Turner, who was posted on a small hillock, called our attention to a number of moving objects some distance back in the sandhills. He had noticed them for some time, but, thinking they might be buffaloes, had the good judgment to say nothing about the matter until the mules were securely packed. A hasty observation convinced us that an army of mounted Indians were coming toward us as

fast as their ponies could bring them. They were, perhaps, a half-mile away, but, being enveloped in a cloud of dust, it was hard to estimate their number, but we thought there were at least three hundred of them.

We mounted our horses at once and forced the pack-mules to their best pace, being anxious to get from the hills into the river bottom before being overtaken by the three hundred Sioux warriors. The main road up the river at this point lay along the bluffs, and we thought our train would not be far in advance of the point where we should strike it. Before we were quite out of the hills, the Indians announced their presence by yelling like a pack of devils, which frightened the horses and was the means of increasing their speed, though the pack-mules did not seem to be at all impressed with the importance of the occasion; but, by the vigorous use of the ram-rods from our guns, we held them to time, kept them in the lead and saved the beef.

After such observations in the rear as we were able to make, we became satisfied that the whole three hundred Indians were coming down on us like a whirlwind. They were but a short distance in our rear when we reached the valley, but here we had the good fortune to find ourselves within forty rods of six of our men, who had been detained by re-packing their mules.

Being in the near vicinity of six well-armed comrades and having a good view of our train slowly moving up the valley but a short distance away, gave us much courage; but what put courage in us took it out of the Indians.

Having recovered from our fright and seeing the Indians hesitating, we wheeled around and brought our guns to bear for fight, but they took the back track in good earnest. Whether they would have harmed us had they gotten hold of us they knew best, of course, but we had no disposition to test the matter.

When we became the pursuers and the In-

dians the pursued, their numbers seemed to have diminished amazingly, for we could count only about fifteen Indians. Whatever became of the other two hundred and eighty-five I never knew. The General said he would wager a beaver tail that there had not been over a dozen Indians within ten miles of us; but, of course, we knew better.

On July 8th, I had an opportunity of gratifying my desire to capture at least one buffalo, for I was then one of the hunters. Exchanging my Spanish saddle-mule for a horse said to be a leader in the chase, we were off before sunrise, and in a short time sighted a large herd of buffalo quietly grazing on the river bottom. They were estimated to be four miles away, but in the clear atmosphere of that locality they seemed much nearer. We managed to keep out of their sight until within a mile of them, when they threw up their heads and were soon in rapid motion for the hills. We thought to cut them off by taking

advantage of the ground, but they beat us to the bluffs and for a short time were out of sight in a perfect labyrinth of low sandhills, among which they scattered in all directions. It would have been useless to attempt to estimate the number of animals in the herd, for they occupied three or four miles of the river bottom, yet it seemed but a few minutes from the time those nearest us became aware of our presence until every buffalo had gained the bluffs and were lost to view. Our horses became excited and did their best to overtake the fleeing herd. Each hunter selected his route and were soon out of sight of one another.

An immense cloud of dust hung over the landscape and a buffalo could hardly be distinguished thirty yards away, while numerous washouts, or gullies, made rapid riding both difficult and dangerous.

Back in the hills, a mile or two, I found myself within twenty yards of the game, and,

raising my gun, I fired at the nearest buffalo. The animal didn't fall, but I did. At the report of the gun my horse (not being accustomed to fire-arms) became terribly frightened and changed his course very suddenly, leaving me in a heap on the hard, gravelly earth.

The fall resulted in my being considerably bruised and shaken up, but not otherwise injured. My clothing received some gaping rents, while my canteen was crushed into a shapeless mass and completely ruined. I was pleased, however, to find that my gun had passed through the ordeal without material injury.

The frightened horse took the back track at once, carrying with him my ammunition and small arms, and leaving me with an empty gun to get out of the hills as best I could. Slowly and sorrowfully I walked back to the valley, where I found my horse and joined the other hunters, and thus ended my first and last buffalo hunt.

Here I learned that not a buffalo had been taken from that vast herd, and that two other hunters, as well as myself, had been unhorsed in the grand chase. This ended buffalo hunting on horseback by our party, and we understood what the General meant when he told us at starting out, that with our limited experience and want of trained horses, we would be more likely to return from the chase with broken heads than a dead buffalo.

The outcome of this exploit was very disappointing, but, as the prospect of adventure was a great incentive to our crossing the plains, we had no right to complain when finding some things quite disagreeable.

Early in the morning of July 20th we bade a final adieu to the Platte, and, after a long day's march across a dry region, struck the Sweet Water river an hour or two after dark, at a point about one thousand miles from the frontier and seven thousand feet above the level of the sea.

The Sweet Water is a tributary of the Platte, taking its rise in the neighboring mountains where it is fed by melting snow. Its clear, cool water, which was highly appreciated by our party after having so long used the turbid waters of the Platte, and the broad valley which afforded splendid grazing for our animals, with large quantities of driftwood which furnished fuel for cooking, and the grand view of distant mountains, besides other interesting objects near by, combined to make it a camping place at which we would have liked to remain for a week.

The country traversed for the preceding two weeks was rough and rugged. After crossing the north fork of the Platte, we had long stretches of dry, barren plains, vast fields of wild sage, scraggy hills, deep and rocky ravines, and miles of volcanic rocks and ashes. The dust from the ashes was very annoying to both man and beast. Nearly all of the men had their lips covered with court-plaster, while

their inflamed noses and eyes showed the effects of the vicious alkaline dust.

We lost two mules in crossing the north fork of the Platte, besides three which became exhausted and were left in the barren hills. It seemed that we were out of the range of the buffalo, and, though a number of deer taken along the water-courses added something to our bill of fare, we drew largely on our regular supplies.

Wild sage (*artemisia*) is a small shrub from one to six feet high. It is found from the British possessions on the north to Mexico on the south. It delights in dry, sandy plains and gravelly hillsides, but is shy of river bottoms and rich soils. In color it resembles the common garden sage, and exhales an agreeable odor. It furnished travelers with the means of cooking when no other fuel could be had. It also relieved the desert country of much of its monotony.

On striking the steep and rocky hills, nearly

all wagon companies found their wagons overloaded, and, in order to lighten them, such property as they could best spare was left along the road. On our march through the foothills we passed many abandoned wagons, also chains, ropes, saddles, shovels, spades, picks, gold-washers, crow-bars, and a complete outfit for a saw-mill.

As our pack-mules were losing flesh and showing signs of failure, in order to relieve them our tents were thrown aside as surplus plunder, and we slept in the open air. Many other useless articles were left at different points. A large auger, with a very elaborate extension stem, with which we had intended to prospect the lower regions to any desired depth for the yellow metal, was left in the foothills, and a lot of sheet-iron gold-washers, made for the purpose of separating large quantities of gold from the shining sands, found a resting place on the Platte river. Either of the above would have been about as useful in a

gold mine as a Texas steer in a china shop.

Rock Independence was near our camp. The granite pile, being isolated and arising from a level plain, is a landmark of enormous proportions and quite worthy to stand as a sentinel over the mountain peaks which are to be seen from its summit. It is nineteen hundred and fifty feet long and one hundred and twenty feet high, occupying twenty-one acres of ground; yet it is only one of the wonders, and quite in keeping with the immensity of objects to be found in that locality. Although having been surfeited with rocks for several days, we spent considerable time and enthusiasm in viewing the monster, which looked like it might be a mammoth egg half buried in the earth.

Two or three miles from our camp was the Devil's Gate, where the Sweet Water cut through a granite ridge. The length of the canyon is about twelve hundred feet and the width eighty feet, while the walls of solid rock

were over four hundred feet high and appeared to be vertical, but this illusion was dispelled when, after climbing to the summit of the ridge, none of our party of four persons succeeded in throwing a stone across the yawning chasm.

Our camp was near the entrance of the famous South Pass through the Rocky mountains, the road to which led in a southwest direction for about one hundred and forty miles to the summit, and then about the same distance in a northwest course to a point about due west.

On July 21st, we remained in camp and were occupied in washing, mending our clothing and repairing our packs and saddles. While sitting around a bright campfire at the close of the day, the General informed us that he intended to leave the traveled road and take us through the Wind River mountains, and strike the road on the other side of the main range, where it enters the Great Basin.

We were not only surprised and delighted, but heartily endorsed the arrangement, as we felt assured that while on the short cut we would find an abundance of water, grass, fuel and game. We were to make the trip by easy marches, with the view of recruiting our animals and adding something to our stock of provisions.

CHAPTER V.

*The Best Hunter—Venison in an Oak Tree—
A Change of Wind—Uncle Ben and Party
Lost—Mountain Wolves—Crossing the Wa-
ter-Shed—Game in Abundance—Extra
Guard Duty—A Mountain Park—Hunting
Bear, Bighorn and Beaver.*

Our hunter, Benjamin Snow, had spent the greater part of twenty years of his life in hunting and trapping in the White mountains and forests of Maine. Loaded down with a rifle, two vicious-looking pistols and a large knife, he could cover more ground in a given time than any mule in our outfit. He never hunted on horseback, claiming that he could secure more game by still-hunting than any ten

mounted men, and no one could gainsay the fact.

Uncle Ben was about forty years of age, nearly six feet high, weighed one hundred and eighty pounds and built for heavy service from the ground up. He could neither read nor write, yet he possessed a lot of real practical common sense. Dressed in a gray suit, with his unshaven face, long hair and wide-visored, close-fitting cap, he was an odd-looking character. He was of a kind and amiable disposition, very companionable, and the narratives of his hunting exploits rendered him a welcome guest around our campfires. Some of his adventures when buffalo hunting on the plains are worthy of mention.

While we were among the hills on the upper waters of the Platte, one morning about daylight, Uncle Ben mounted his mule and started west along the traveled road. Our train, having made about fifteen miles, halted for dinner on a small water-course, where,

along the narrow, deep bottoms, were growing isolated patches of shrubs and dwarfed trees. Near the crossing, picketed in a grass plat, we found Uncle Ben's mule, and near by, hanging from the branch of a small tree, was the carcass of a fine deer, from which steaks had been cut, while a smouldered campfire told where our hunter had cooked his dinner. A stake about four feet long was noticed in a conspicuous place, and in the split top, at right angles with the upright, had been placed a small stick, with the sharpened end pointing west.

After cooking and eating the venison for dinner, we took in Uncle Ben's mule and pushed on, encamping about dusk in a small valley, which afforded but little grass and a meager supply of water. Here we found Uncle Ben. He had killed a large buffalo, about four miles away, and was waiting for help to bring in the meat. There was no time to lose, for it was already a question as

to who should secure the game, ourselves or the wolves. Hastily watering our horses, filling our canteens and snatching the game-pouches and beef-saw, ten of us, all mounted, were soon following Uncle Ben's lead over the hills. Darkness was coming on apace, a cold wind had sprung up from the west, angry-looking clouds were floating over mountain tops, and there was every indication of a cold and cheerless night.

Owing to the darkness and sameness of everything around us, there was some difficulty in locating the game; but we found it, picketed the animals in the best grass, dressed the beef and from it cooked and ate our supper, after which we packed up and were off for the camp. It was very dark, and the wind, which increased in violence, was accompanied with dashes of rain. A sudden fall in temperature also added much to our discomfort. Shaping our course by the wind, which we still thought to be coming from the west, we plodded on;

but, after traveling four or five hours and finding no camp, the conviction forced itself upon us that on a very dark and gloomy night we were lost in a wilderness. Finding ourselves in a valley, at the base of a high and rocky ridge which was too steep for horses to climb, we ascended it on foot, but could see nothing of the fire which the boys in camp had promised to keep burning. We then discharged six guns in a volley, but could hear no responsive sound. It being past midnight, we returned to the valley, picketed the animals, selected a guard by drawing lots, posted the victim and resigned ourselves to fate.

The wind was sweeping down the valley at a furious rate, and, as we could find no shelter from its force, we decided to build a wind-break from the mass of loose rocks at the foot of the hill; but the task had hardly been commenced when some one suggested that it was a good place for rattlesnakes, and moving the rocks might disturb them. We abandoned

the scheme at once. Having no fuel with which to make a fire, and being frequently treated to squalls of snow and hail, together with the mournful howling of wolves which had scented our meat, we passed a miserable night.

At the dawn of day we again ascended the hill, which proved to be one of the highest in the vicinity, but could not recognize any landmarks. The storm had spent its fury, and through rifts in the clouds could be seen clear sky, and we were then able to locate the cardinal points, by which it was discovered that the wind was blowing from the north, and our ignorance of the change was the cause of all our misery. Instead of traveling south, as we should have done, we had taken a due westerly course, keeping parallel with the road and finally finding ourselves about eight miles nearer California than we cared to be that morning.

An hour's travel in a southerly direction

brought us to the road, where, knowing that the company would not break camp until we were heard from, one of our party was selected by lot to go and inform the company of our safety. But a few minutes elapsed before the one chosen set out on his mission, after which we cooked and ate breakfast from the meat that had caused us so much trouble. Without waiting for the arrival of the company, we started west along the road, continuing until near noon, when we found water and halted, being joined by the company soon afterwards.

At another time, Uncle Ben had killed a buffalo, two or three miles off the road, but failed to get into camp and report the fact before night, and, as there were some doubts about finding the game in the darkness, it was left till daylight next morning, when eight men went out to where the game was left, but they found nothing except a part of the skin and the larger bones, the wolves

having devoured every vestige of the meat.

The large mountain wolves prowled around our camp every night and treated us to the most unearthly, lonesome and homesick music that could be imagined. The only thing that would stop their infernal noise was the report of a gun, and then for only a few minutes. The cowardly brutes never came within reach of our muzzle-loaders in the daytime and were rarely seen at night.

Near nightfall on July 29th, we encamped on the Little Sandy river, a tributary of the Colorado. We had passed the divide and were on the waters that found their way to the Pacific Ocean. We were under the necessity of traveling at a very moderate gait and leading our mules single file, as the trail through rocky gorges and along steep hillsides allowed the passage of only one animal at a time, consequently we made the distance of only one hundred and ten miles from the Sweet Water in eight days.

We found in the mountains all the requisites of camp life in abundance. Game was plentiful and readily taken, though we had made no attempts as yet to prepare meat for future use. Our stock of bread being nearly exhausted, we were restricted to a purely animal diet and lived on the flesh of the deer, antelope, elk, bighorn, beaver and jack-rabbit.

Beavers along Little Sandy were quite numerous, and wherever there were trees near the banks we found traces of their work. We saw trees one foot through which had been cut down with their teeth.

We were crossing the highest mountains in the Wind River range, and the most of us enjoyed the immensity of that elevated region. We met no Indians after leaving the Sweet Water, but while traversing the territory of the Blackfeet (a jealous and warlike people) the nightwatch was doubled. Twelve men were assigned their stations at sunset and relieved at midnight by twelve others, who remained

on their beats until sunrise the next morning. As we were never troubled with insomnia, this extra guard duty was a little trying. As an additional precaution, we placed a sentinel on a high point during our noon halts to give warning of the approach of Indians and watch for game. Volunteers were never lacking for that service, for when armed with the Doctor's field-glass (as was usually the case) they had opportunities which few could hope to enjoy.

The General was anxious to meet some of the Blackfeet, for in former years he had been well acquainted with many of their hunters, and felt confident that a renewal of the old acquaintance would be a sure guarantee of good treatment by the hunters of the tribe as long as we remained in their territory.

Our men at this time, notwithstanding the animal diet, were all enjoying excellent health, and, although we slept in the open air with no covering but our blankets to protect us from the frosty atmosphere, not a cold had

been contracted and no complaints were heard from any one.

On July 30th, the advance guard was off early looking for a passage through the next range, for we seemed to be in a deep hole and surrounded by rugged mountains and conical peaks. We traveled up the Little Sandy in a northwest course for five or six miles, where we struck a tributary of the river, and up this stream, in a westerly course by a difficult and dangerous trail, we toiled until about 2 p. m., when we were rewarded by striking a fine mountain park in which to halt for dinner.

In the little valley of fifteen or twenty acres, nestling between mountain peaks, we found everything needed for our comfort. Even the deer, which furnished the meat for our dinner, was captured on the spot by the hunters who were in advance of our train. The valley was pronounced the most picturesque mountain park yet seen, and many of our party would have liked to camp there for

a day. There was no timber within view except small evergreens and thickets of service-berry bushes.

The brooklet along which we rested was coursing through a modest little canyon, twenty feet deep in some places, and at one point not more than four or five feet across the top. A small field of snow on the north side of a mountain peak furnished water for a beautiful little cascade, which was leaping from a shelf of solid rock, with a perpendicular fall of twenty-five or thirty feet, which, with its crystal waters shimmering in the sunlight, formed a scene of rare beauty.

About two hours were spent in that mountain retreat, which proved to be a fine field for students in geology, while in these little valleys, with rare plants in brilliant bloom, the botanist loves to linger.

While at our halt, two bears were sighted by the lookout among the berry bushes, in a gorge not far from camp. Twenty armed

men, with their dinners half eaten, followed them for more than hour, but the bears got away without a scratch; not so the men, for they returned with rent clothing and many small wounds, resulting from forcing their way through the brush.

We worked our way down the west side of the ridge, and some time after dark formed a camp on the west side of the Big Sandy river, where, being well supplied with grass, fuel and venison, the fatigues of the day were forgotten in refreshing sleep, of which he who has never led a pair of stubborn mules across the rocky mountains, with wild game as his only food, knows nothing.

CHAPTER VI.

A Hard Climb—A Difficult Trail—Grand Scenery—Snow Fields—Mountain Lakes—Uncle Sam's Summit—Fremont's Peak—Cheerful Campfires—Blackfeet Indians—A Mountain Torrent—Crossing the Canyon—A Camp to be Remembered—Rattlesnakes—The Prince of Cranks.

Early in the morning on the last day of July, we left Big Sandy for a climb over the high mountain ridge which lay to the west. As the rising sun lighted up the steep slopes and frowning cliffs, it looked as though neither man nor beast would ever be able to scale its lofty heights; but with hard work and by a very circuitous trail, we reached the summit a little past noon and partook of our lunch of

cold boiled venison, while at the same time we enjoyed scenery of rare beauty and awful grandeur. From this elevated point Fremont's Peak and adjacent mountains, which lay in a northwest direction, were in plain view, enabling us to realize, to some extent, the immensity of the surroundings. A small lake, which seemed to be in a deep rent a little south of us, looked like a mirror lost in a wilderness. The pass down the west side of the mountain proved to be very difficult and, in places, quite dangerous; yet we found ourselves at dark encamped at the foot of the mountain in one of the most beautiful of little parks. A portion of the way down was along the brink of a deep canyon, where a false step meant a tumble of many hundred feet. The medicine chest and ammunition were carried down by the men, while our animals were all safely landed in the valley, and the much-abused mule was given credit with being sure-footed and cool-headed.

Our march for that day was very fatiguing, though interesting, and we gained but a few miles on our journey, which prompted some of the boys to ask if it was one of the General's easy marches.

Climbing mountains proved to be hard work and sometimes disappointing, for frequently, after working our way to a point thought to be the summit of a high ridge, it was found that we had only ascended a foothill, and that rocky benches and often deep gullies, which were difficult to cross, intervened between us and the summit we were aiming to reach, but in cases of that kind we anticipated much pleasure from standing on the loftier pile and viewing the landscape.

These mountains seemed to afford favorite retreats for numerous bears, and, though our hunters had very poor success in capturing them, we saw signs of them everywhere. They were fond of a species of wild cherry which was growing on small trees from six to

twelve feet high, but their favorite food seemed to be the service-berry, and in order to more readily gather the little dainties they broke down trees which were from two to three inches through, and from their roots sprouts sprung up and bore fruit after a year or two. In the sunny ravines and gulches impenetrable thickets were thus formed, which, with the rough and rocky nature of the country, afforded perfect cover for bears and other animals, but made it almost impossible and sometimes quite dangerous for hunters to beat through the mountain jungles. The nights in that elevated region were uncomfortably cold, and ice formed wherever there was still water.

Two mountain sheep and a fine deer were brought into camp early on the morning of August 1st. We frequently saw flocks of the mountain sheep looking down on us from the cliffs, but when frightened they would bound away and again make their appearance from

some higher point. Curiosity often got the better of their discretion, however, and they sometimes ventured within reach of the deadly rifle; but we never saw them plunging over high and perpendicular cliffs, alighting on their heads, as some writers would have us believe.

A high mountain wall to the west of us seemed to bid defiance to our further progress, but soon after starting out we had the good fortune to strike a winding Indian trail, which afforded us an easy passage to the summit, where we halted for dinner. Large fields of snow were seen on the north side of the mountain peaks and slopes. In passing across small bodies of hard-crustcd, dust-colored snow, it would hardly be noticed were it not for the grating sound under the feet, the uniform surface and the absence of rocks.

We saw many small lakes at different levels, some of them several hundred feet above others. They were in deep depressions and

surrounded by high, craggy cliffs. Undoubtedly, they were well stocked with fish, but the want of time and the difficulty of descending to their level prevented us from testing the matter.

We found an abundant supply of water, of crystal purity, all through the mountains. In addition to numerous springs, whose waters were ice-cold, nearly every depression in the hills sent down a small stream, which, in the after part of the day, was flushed with melting snow. The most beautiful little cascades were seen leaping high, perpendicular cliffs, and then plunging into limpid pools and hurrying on to lower levels. In the morning, the supply of snow-water being cut off by the low temperature during the night, the small streams presented a very modest appearance, as they afforded but little water.

Nothing added more to the cheerfulness, comfort and romance of our journey than good campfires on cool nights, and wherever fuel

was found plentiful we used it without stint; though, on dark nights bright fires in deep, narrow valleys, surrounded by mammoth rocks and steep hillsides, formed a weird scene, giving us a realizing sense of our complete isolation from the civilized world and reminding us of the fact of our being in the heart of a vast mountain wilderness, surrounded by wild beasts and wilder Indians. It often produced a sense of loneliness, thoughts of home and friends, and the comforts of civilization.

Having gradually gained in altitude, we experienced no ill effects from the rarified atmosphere when camping ten thousand feet above the level of the sea. From this elevated point can be seen the hills where are found the head waters of four great rivers, namely, Columbia, Missouri, Colorado and the Platte, which proves this locality to be the summit of Uncle Sam's vast possessions.

The trail which we followed up the mountain promised us an easy descent to the valley

to the west, but before we were ready to set out sixteen Blackfeet Indian hunters made their appearance. They came up the trail from the west and were on their way to the Big Sandy for the purpose of hunting game and drying meat. They walked boldly into our camp, saluting us with many a "how-how." They were surprised when the General saluted them in their own tongue, and two of them recognized him at once. The trio seated themselves on the ground and held a long talk, while the balance of them were making a thorough examination of our effects. Supposing them to be arrant thieves (as all Indians were reputed to be), our baggage was closely watched.

A number of these Indians were armed with fairly good guns of an old pattern, of which they had taken the best of care. They were very anxious to trade for ammunition, but, as they possessed nothing which would be useful to us, we presented them with small quantities

of powder and lead, with which they were highly pleased. The Indians seemed proud of their long bows and were fond of exhibiting them. They were of excellent workmanship, the brittle red cedar of which they were made being heavily re-enforced by a tough animal sinew, which was laid on with marvelous skill, giving them phenomenal strength. Their arrows were long and slender, neatly feathered and barbed with flints identical in material and shape with those found in our own locality. Their skill in the use of the bow and arrow was wonderful, for they not only made excellent hits at a stationary target, but a hat, being thrown high in the air for one of them to shoot at, came down punctured with two holes, while the owner seemed thankful that his head was not in the hat when the arrow pierced it.

The General learned from these Indians that the trail which we had followed since morning would lead us through the mountains to

the head waters of Lewis fork of Columbia river, near the northern rim of the Great Basin, and that we would pass the village to which these Indians belonged and where the chief of the tribe had his residence. The General was desirous of seeing the chief and obtaining his permission to make an extended hunt in some favorable locality in his territory, where we could prepare meat for future use. Our guests, after having tobacco and a few trinkets distributed among them, took their departure east, while we started west.

We found it no easy matter to follow an Indian foot-trail down the steep mountainside with pack-mules. We were forced, at times, to leave the trail and select a better passage, as our mules could not be persuaded to descend some of the steep, rocky slopes. On reaching the base of the mountain, we found coursing through a narrow canyon a roaring mountain torrent, about ten feet wide, which, owing to the high banks and rocky channel,

we had much difficulty in crossing. With the only spade in our outfit we were over an hour digging down the banks of the stream, which were at this point about twenty feet high and nearly perpendicular, and after filling spaces between large boulders with rocks, we crossed in about two feet of water and formed our camp on the west bank. In order to guard against accidents, we unloaded the most of our mules and carried their packs across the stream by hand. While we were preparing the crossing, one of our pack-mules was crowded over the wall of the canyon, which at that point was sixty or seventy feet high. The large boulders in the bed of the creek caught him, while his pack went whirling down the stream at a lively rate, but was subsequently recovered in a damaged condition. The mule had dumped his pack for the last time.

Our camping place afforded no level ground on which to sleep, the steep mountains crowding down to the very brink of the canyon,

through which rushed the foaming torrent, and our camp was one of extreme wildness. The evidence of terrible convulsions which surrounded us; the scrubby cedars under which we slept; the mountain slopes, rocks and cliffs, lighted up by the blaze of our camp-fires; the danger from camping on the very brink of a deep canyon; the mules climbing around among the rocks while cropping the scanty bunch-grass; the odor arising from the sizzling venison; the little strip of sky seen between the mountain tops; the gurgling of the stream and our remoteness from civilization, formed a scene which is indelibly imprinted on the memory.

Our experience with rattlesnakes was unique. As they were seldom found in New England, but few of our party had ever seen one, and, expecting to meet them on the plains, we had a wholesome dread of them. We were under the impression that they were always on the offensive and hunting for prey, and

could spring six or eight feet and fasten their fangs in the flesh of their victim, causing death almost instantly. After leaving the frontier, we were very cautious and constantly watching for those terrible snakes, but failed to make their acquaintance until reaching the rocky hills on the upper waters of the Platte, where they were quite numerous, and we had excellent opportunities for studying their habits.

One morning at daylight, after camping for a night in a brushy ravine which some time previously had been burned over, it was discovered that one of our horses was very stiff in the fore legs and quite unable to walk, while his breast was badly swollen and in which was found a very small wound emitting a few drops of blood. Of course a snake was accused of being the author of the trouble, and we wondered that the horse was still alive. The Doctor's attention being called to the case, he, after a thorough examination and

considerable hard work (assisted by several amateur veterinary surgeons), succeeded in extracting a snag from the horse's breast as large around as a pipe-stem and about three and a half inches long. The horse recovered from his supposed snake-bite and lived to carry his rider to the end of his journey.

After the experience of that morning, it was learned that rattlesnakes were not as aggressive as we had supposed, but quite harmless if let alone, and we seemed to care but little for them, though we always thoroughly examined our sleeping ground before spreading our blankets for the night. We were surprised on finding that the six-foot snakes which we had heard so much about had dwindled down to about thirty inches in length, which proved that distance not only lends enchantment to the view, but also adds much to the length of a snake.

We had excellent opportunities for the study of human nature and soon learned the char-

acter of the men composing our company, who, as a rule, proved to be moral, industrious and agreeable, and yet we had among us the prince of cranks. He was a chronic grumbler and nothing ever met his approval. He was always hungry and thirsty, forever tired and sleepy, too indolent to carry wood or water, and too lazy to wash himself or bathe the saddle-galls on his mules. He would lie, cheat and steal, shirk guard duty whenever he could frame an excuse, and was a regular all-around nuisance. He never looked on the bright side of anything, and had no eye for the beautiful unless it was cooked; he never saw a grand old mountain until he had thumped his head against it, and then cursed because it was in his way. He could never understand how anything was to be gained by coming in contact with so much grandeur and ruggedness. On one occasion, as we were about to encamp on the bank of a stream, in alighting from his mule he sprained an ankle. Seating

himself on a rock and baring his foot, he called the Doctor, who gave the foot a glance and said, "wash it," and then passed on. After washing his foot the Doctor was again consulted, who ordered him to wash the other foot. He obeyed the order, after which his hurt was properly cared for. At another time, being remonstrated with for abusing his mule, he flew into a passion and threatened to "do up" the whole crowd, when the boys took him to the river, and I will venture the assertion that he never, living or dead, got a more thorough or lively bathing. Such men as he should have been born too late to cross the plains in '49.

CHAPTER VII.

A Mule's Last Tumble—Camp in the "Wash Bowl"—Wild Onions—A Promiscuous Tangle—A Blackfoot Village—An Old Warrior—Squaws Cooking Meat in Baskets—Indian Babies Decorated—Fattening Dogs for Food—A Sharp Decline in the Berry Market—Permission to Hunt on Green River.

On August 2d, we resumed our journey long before the sun penetrated the deep depression in which we had spent the night. Our winding trail lay along the steep mountainside, a sputtering stream rushing through a deep canyon on our right, with a high rock wall on our left. While slowly working our way along the steep slope of what appeared to be

an ancient landslide, a poor, worn-out mule, which was allowed to follow without being packed, missed his footing and went tumbling and sliding down the steep incline, with rocks, gravel and dust following in his train. His downward course was arrested by a large boulder, when he recovered his footing and attempted to climb the hill, but again fell and was last seen as he pitched over the brink of the canyon, at the bottom of which he doubtless ended his earthly career. On reaching the summit a little before noon, we halted for dinner and were much interested in the formation of the mountain on which we were resting, and concluded that in some former age it had been a conical peak, but we found it to be a level summit of ten or twelve acres in extent and in an almost exact circle with well defined outlines. The numerous rocks of a cubical form scattered over its surface, many of them of large dimensions, suggested to our minds vast quarries worked by mythical giants

in former ages. Some of the boys named the point the "City of Rocks," while those who discovered or imagined the lowest point on the summit to be in the center called it the "Camp in the Wash Bowl."

We discovered in several localities in the mountains a kind of wild onion, which was used in flavoring soups made of bones and remnants of meat. After having been so long deprived of vegetables, they were a welcome adjunct to our bill of fare. The Doctor pronounced them healthful, in a general way, and also excellent as a preventative of scurvy, from which we were liable to suffer when living on an exclusive flesh diet, and he advised us to use them freely whenever they could be found. These wild onions were not very large, but what they lacked in size was made up in strength. When eating them in liberal quantities it is very doubtful whether we would have been cordially received in refined society.

After an hour's halt we resumed our journey, and down towards the foot of the mountain we came to a place where there had been a dense growth of scrubby cedar trees, but, the most of them having been blown up by the roots, it took a good deal of hard work to get through them, they being in a promiscuous tangle.

Late in the afternoon we struck a pleasant little valley, through which a fine mountain stream was flowing, and by following its course we reached the village of the Blackfeet Indians near nightfall. They had selected for their summer camp a beautiful natural park, which was surrounded by high, wooded hills, while the grassy little valley, with its low, scattering oaks, gave it the appearance of an orchard, as often seen among the hills of New England. As we came abruptly into their village, the frightened women, children and most of the dogs went scurrying down the creek and were out of sight in a jiffy. Neither was there a

man to be seen. But the General, calling to them in their own tongue, brought out from their wigwams several old men, who were soon on friendly terms with all of us. The dignified old Chief welcomed the General in a cordial and friendly manner, treating him as an old friend and inviting him to his lodge, where they ate, smoked and talked for many an hour.

The Chief gave us permission to form our camp near his village, and assured us that we need entertain no fears about being molested by his people during our stay, but the General cautioned us to keep a sharp lookout for our property, and gave us to understand that the Blackfeet Indians were never too young nor too old to steal from the white man. A vigilant watch was kept through the night, but, except the hideous howling of the Indian dogs, nothing unusual occurred.

On the morning of August 3d the Indian camp was all astir. We saw no women or

children about the village the night before, but that morning they were at home, dogs and all. The Chief visited our camp early, accompanied by two squaws carrying deer skins, which they spread on the ground, forming seats for the General and the members of his mess. The Chief, by special invitation, was to breakfast with the General.

Four other dignified old Indians were strolling around our camp and seemed deeply interested in the preparations for breakfast. They readily accepted an invitation to eat with us, and we fed them from our choicest stores. They ate with ravenous appetites and appeared capable of stowing away a vast amount of food, but never seeming to have quite enough. I hardly think it would be safe to try the "quail-a-day" racket on an old Blackfoot hunter.

One of the superannuated hunters we judged to be very old, though we could ascertain nothing from him or his companions as to the

number of his years. He was nearly blind and barely able to walk without help, and he had passed the period when he was as straight as the proverbial Indian of most writers. His companions ministered to his wants with a care that would put to shame many a pale-face brother. He was tall and broad-shouldered, and, if in his prime he possessed skill and bravery in proportion to his noble frame, was surely a warrior to be dreaded. We speculated much among ourselves as to his age, and estimated him to be at least a hundred and twenty; but the Doctor, after an examination of the old man (to which the latter submitted without protest), gave it as his opinion that he was not over eighty-five years of age. This verdict was not very flattering to our judgment; yet, notwithstanding, we pronounced him a regular old mummified specimen.

Here we had an opportunity of seeing Indians at home and to observe their habits. Breakfast being disposed of, the old Indians

took us through the village, which was composed of about twenty-five lodges; but, as it was a summer camp, many of the wigwams were temporary affairs, a number of them being made by leaning poles against branches of trees, while skins of wild animals formed the covering. Others were constructed by placing poles in a circle around trees and covering with brush, while, hanging on the body of the trees, in the center of the lodges, there were oval-shape shields about twenty inches long and a half-inch thick. They were made of green buffalo hide, and, to secure the proper thickness, two pieces were skillfully glued together. After being thoroughly dried, they were absolutely arrow-proof. We also noticed spears, six to ten feet long, made of red cedar and barbed with flints. They were perfectly straight and neatly finished. There were also bows, quivers containing arrows, moccasins, belts and many other articles dear to the heart of an Indian.

The Chief's place of abode was of a different order of architecture, it being constructed of poles about twenty feet long, which were set at an angle, forming a cone about fifteen feet in diameter at the base. It was covered with finely-dressed buffalo and deer skins, which, being artistically ornamented, gave the Chief's home a very novel and interesting appearance; but we received quite a shock on noticing the uncomfortable and filthy condition of the interior. The lodges and cooking of these Indians were all exceedingly filthy and quite repulsive.

The great number of dogs around camp, which were of all sizes and ages, struck us with astonishment. The older ones kept their distance, but the puppies were continually tumbling about our feet and nipping at our shoes, while near by we discovered an enclosure about five feet square, formed of rocks and covered with poles, in which a good-sized dog was being fattened for a feast, but of the

importance of the occasion requiring such a delicacy nothing could be learned.

We were surprised to hear one of the old Indians speaking in English. He informed us that he had sometime previously made a journey with white trappers down the Columbia river to the Pacific, where he spent two years and then returned to his tribe. I think the old heathen made application to every man in our company for whisky, and, though he failed to obtain the coveted article, had excellent success in begging tobacco.

Here we saw the Indian squaws boiling meat in baskets. In my younger days I had heard of this being done, and was at a loss to know how a basket could be made to hold water, but when I saw their filthy method of cooking had filled all the open spaces between the ribs of the basket with dirt, the mystery was explained. Their baskets for cooking purposes were about six or eight inches deep, sixteen to twenty inches in diameter, and

almost the exact shape of a large wooden bowl. In front of each lodge a few rocks were arranged, forming a small fireplace, in which fire was burning, while in and around the fire were quite a number of round, smooth stones, about the size of base-balls. The heated stones, which were handled with two sticks the thickness of a lead pencil and about a foot long, were being taken from the fire by the squaws and placed in the boiling baskets, and the sputtering which followed seemed to be highly satisfactory to the operators. One of the old squaws, noticing our interest in the matter, handed me the sticks and motioned for me to go to work. I accepted the challenge, and, after several trials, succeeded in taking a stone from the fire, dropping it in the boiling water with a splash and burning my hands quite severely. I made no attempt to repeat the experiment, while the old squaw laughed at my dismal failure.

Some of the boys were curious to see an In-

dian baby, but the squaws, at first, flatly refused to show them; when John Turner, one of our party, who kept in stock a supply of Indian jewelry, fished from his capacious pockets a fine string of glittering beads, which, with a few words from our English-speaking Indian, was the means of there being offered for exhibition a nude and very dirty baby, and its neck was at once encircled with the shining baubles; but the mother of the baby intimated that the decoration was not complete without ear-rings, which she insisted on having. John proved equal to the occasion by producing the coveted articles, while, by this time, several other squaws were ready to present their papooses to him for decoration. The children were all provided with beads, from the infant to those ten or twelve years of age, and the squaws were each presented with a dozen polished brass buttons.

During the excitement that followed the acquisition of so much wealth, the fires were

suffered to burn low, the baskets ceased to boil, the dogs were quarreling over the half-cooked meat which they had stolen from the baskets, while the women and children were gathered in a knot and in a babel of voices discussed the merits of their precious treasures.

Near the Indian camp was a large grove of service-berry bushes, and quite a quantity of the ripe berries had been gathered and dried by the squaws, who were very anxious to exchange them for such articles as our boys had to trade. They offered to give a half-bushel or more of the dried fruit for a darning-needle; but when it was learned that the fruit had been dried on the flesh side of green deer skins spread on the ground, with flies, dirt and dogs around, there was a sharp decline in the berry market. What struck us as being most abundant about the Indian camp was, first, dirt; second, dogs; third, more dirt.

The old Chief was a very dignified and pre-

possessing Indian, but we thought him quite crafty, when, to give us the privilege of hunting for five days on Green river, he exacted two mules, quite a quantity of tobacco, ammunition and trinkets, though he proposed to throw in an Indian guide to conduct us to good pasturage and hunting grounds. The old man got all he asked for, except the mules, and, judging by his actions, he was satisfied that he had gained the best end of the bargain, and time proved that he had.

After an early dinner we resumed our journey. The Chief detailed the English-speaking Indian to guide us to the hunting ground assigned us. As he was continually boasting of his achievements, honesty and righteousness, the boys called him St. Brag. The old man mounted one of our mules and led us a long march over a very rough and broken country to Green river. Owing to the distance and difficult trail, it was past midnight before the last of the boys came straggling in.

CHAPTER VIII.

*The Hunter's Paradise—Drying Venison—
Six Indian Boys—An Object Lesson—A
Night Adventure—Driven Out of Camp—
"A Set Up Job"—The Lost Bear Hunters
—"Peg Leg Smith"—Washing on the
Plains—Fate of "Tom Thumb."*

At daylight the next morning, it was discovered that we had been conducted to a delightful spot, where, the river hills receding, was formed a level, timberless bottom of two or three hundred acres, thickly set with the finest grasses. This, together with the surrounding hills, which were clothed with timber showing different shades of green; the little valleys between with their sparkling brooks; the higher mountains in the distance;

the giant rocks; the clear and rapid river with its pebbled bed, and the mammoth cotton woods which lined its banks, combined to make it a paradise for the hunter.

St. Brag and about twenty of our men were off before daylight on a grand hunt. The balance of our men were set to work erecting flakes on which to dry the meat of any game that might be secured. Five deer were brought in before ten o'clock, and the day's hunting resulted in the capture of thirteen deer, two beavers and a large number of jack-rabbits. The meat was cut into thin strips, placed on the flakes and, with the sun above and fire and smoke below, soon dried, when it looked like sole-leather and was about as tough. Service-berries were found quite plentiful in the ravines among the hills, and, with our meat diet, they were highly relished.

While hunting two or three miles above our camp, we discovered that the river had cut its way through a high mountain ridge, forming

a canyon with precipitous walls not less than six hundred feet high, while the river was rushing down a steep incline among large boulders with a deafening roar. Owing to the low stage of water, we were enabled to explore the entire length of the canyon, where we enjoyed a scene of majestic grandeur.

While we were cooking supper, six Black-feet Indians came marching down the river towards our camp. They were leading two ponies, loaded with Indian trappings and dried venison. They walked into our camp without hesitation, unpacked their ponies and acted as though they had rights which we were bound to respect. They were mere boys, probably from sixteen to twenty years of age, and a very impertinent, thieving set. They readily accepted an invitation to take supper with us, and they ate as though they had been fasting for that special occasion.

Here we had another object lesson in Indian culinary art. St. Brag, with the help of the

Indian boys, built a fire and placed on and around it quite a number of stones of different sizes. The heads of several deer, which had been thrown aside, were taken by the old Indian, who, after inserting a stick in the mouth of each, held them over the blazing fire until the hair was completely burned off. The heads, without further preparation, together with two beaver-tails, were neatly wrapped in deer-skin, with the flesh side in, and the whole securely tied with willow twigs. The fire having burned down, the larger stones were placed in a circle, forming a cavity into which the bundle of heads was fitted, and over all was placed the small stones and pebbles which had been heated in the fire. The whole was then covered with coals, ashes and sand to the depth of five or six inches and left till morning, when, the oven being opened, the deer-heads and beaver-tails were found done to a turn, and from them seven Indians made their breakfast, which they seemed to

prefer to our fried venison and stewed serviceberries.

The General had arranged an elk hunt for the next day, and Uncle Ben had selected his partners for a deer hunt. We were called by the guards before daylight, and, after a hurried breakfast, the hunters were off for the hills; the fishermen were strolling up and down the river hunting for deep holes, while the six young Indians were looking through our camp to see what they would best try to steal. The elk hunt for the day proved a failure, and deer hunting was far from satisfactory; as the game seemed to have all run away. The Indians said "too much white man, too much shoot."

Our Indian boys were still with us, and there was no prospect of their leaving. They were living on the fat of our camp and had to be watched continually or they would have stolen everything. They seemed to consider themselves as having license to take whatever

they could hide or carry away, and acted accordingly.

We found that after paying for the privilege of hunting for several days in the Blackfoot country, and having as yet taken but little game, we were about to be driven out by six Indians, all mere boys at that. Many of our party believed the whole job was arranged by the old scoundrel of a Chief, in order to rob us of everything.

About 5 o'clock p. m. we were ordered to be ready to resume the journey early next morning, but to give the Indians no indication of our intention; yet it seemed they divined our purpose of breaking camp and were resolved to make the most of their last chance.

We had in our company a big, brawny, good-natured Irishman, who possessed uncommon muscular strength, and on proper occasions never hesitated to use it. He was assigned to special guard duty from midnight to sunrise. While the regular guards were

on their beats, surrounding the camp and animals, he, with two others, was detailed to keep the Indian boys from stealing everything in the camp, but in this he had no end of trouble. He caught three of them in the act of taking a blanket from the river, where it had been left for the purpose of washing. A violent struggle ensued, at the end of which our Mike retained one-half of the blanket and the Indian boys the other half. The whole camp was aroused by the tumult, and, as it was near morning, we commenced preparations to resume our journey. It was learned from the guards that the Indians had taken their ponies outside of the picket line during the night and gone with all their effects. They had also taken with them that half blanket, five or six shoes (mostly odd ones), one of our best saddles and several cooking utensils. St. Bragg was also missing, but when or how he got away nobody knew. We were glad to be done with the Blackfeet,

though we looked upon them as a very interesting people and as noble types of the American Indian. They had none of that shriveled and dwarfed appearance, which was afterwards found to be characteristic of the Root Diggers of the Great Basin. Occupying, as they did, a section of country abounding in game, together with a variety of wild berries, seeds and edible roots, their food supply was abundant. They were capable of being the warmest of friends, or the most bitter of enemies, as best suited the occasion.

On August 10th, we made an early camp on an island in Bear river, the principal tributary of Salt Lake. Here the General had an opportunity of visiting an old friend who lived on this island.

After leaving Green river, whose waters find their way to the Pacific, we crossed several low mountain ranges, which seemed to have been thrown up in promiscuous masses without regard to order or system, and which were

found even more difficult to cross than the higher mountains further east. We would sometimes climb to the top of a ridge to find that the only way to get down was the way we had just climbed up. Therefore we were often compelled to retrace our steps, and on one occasion, after a hard afternoon's work, pitched our camp for the night in the same little valley in which we had halted for dinner.

On the second morning from Green river, Uncle Ben, with three companions, set out on a bear hunt. Their continued absence caused us some uneasiness, but they finally came in alive, after having been three days lost in the hills and canyons. They had evidently had a rough time, for their clothing was in tatters, and they were bruised and lame from tumbling around among the rocks. They were quite overjoyed on getting back into camp, and seemed glad that they were spared to tell the tale. They were loaded down with bear meat and blood-curdling accounts of their hair-

breadth escapes and thrilling adventures. The meat was soon disposed of, but the bear stories were treasured up for the benefit of later generations. Our quartette of bear hunters became the butt of many jokes, but they always referred to the fact that they got the bear and we ate the meat.

Near our camp on this island lived "Peg Leg" Smith, a white man who had a unique history. The General had been well acquainted with him in former times; had hunted and trapped with him and probably knew more of his history than any other white man then living, and from him I gleaned the following: About the year 1800, Smith and two other restless and adventurous boys of uncertain age were trapping on the frontier of the then unknown West, but they longed for a wider and more romantic field in which to ply their chosen vocation. They were ambitious to emulate the veteran trappers of the Rocky mountains, of whom they had heard so

much. With their arms, ammunition, beaver traps and two small mules, on which were packed all their earthly belongings, they set their faces to the West, with nothing less than the Pacific Ocean as their goal. In early winter they found themselves in the Wind River mountains, and as it was too late in the season to continue their journey to the Pacific (as was their intention), they took up their abode with the Blackfeet Indians, with whom they continued to live for an indefinite length of time. The Crow Indians, having declared war with the Blackfeet, invaded their country, and a terrible battle ensued in which Smith's two companions were killed and himself seriously wounded. Having been shot in the knee with a poisoned arrow, his wound was very dangerous, but he was cared for by the Blackfeet, who, after their remedies and incantations failed to cure the wound, amputated his right leg above the knee, from which he fully recovered. He was then

adopted into the tribe, became a full-fledged Blackfoot and married one of their dusky maidens. His residence was built of sun-dried bricks. Its size was fourteen by twenty feet, with walls six feet high, and was covered with a roof of long strips of bark, while a stone fireplace in one end, with a hole in the roof for the passage of smoke, completed the outfit. The floor was of mother earth, while buffalo and deer-skins were the only furnishings of the room. In this miserable hovel "Peg Leg" Smith had lived for thirty-five years, during which time he had raised a large family of half-breeds. He had the reputation of being the most expert trapper of the Rockies, and from him the young men of his tribe took their first lessons. He seemed to have made no effort to improve himself or his surroundings, nor was there evidence of his having cultivated the soil. The little bottoms along the river, which were extremely rich, had never been polluted by

the hand of a white Indian. He lived upon the fruits of the chase and such spontaneous productions as were found in his locality. He was scantily dressed in buckskin and went stumping around on a wooden leg of his own make, while his long hair and smoke-cured face gave him the appearance of being as good an Indian as any of them, but I failed to see that he was any better.

To show that "Peg Leg" Smith was not a myth, the following dispatch from Yuma, Arizona Territory, was published in the Indianapolis Journal, July 11, 1895:

"YUMA, A. T., July 10.—It is now generally believed that the old mine found near India, on the desert, by the McHaney brothers, is the old "Peg Leg" mine, found by "Peg Leg" Smith and party sixty years ago. The quality of quartz, old workings, human bones, kind of gold, richness of ore and location indicate that it is really the old mine. It is producing from \$300 to \$1,000 per day in a two-stamp mill.

Two million dollars has been offered for the property."

The reader may be curious to know how we did our washing when crossing the plains. We adopted the trappers' system, though we could only practice it when camping on rapid streams of clear water and was managed about as follows: We first secured a pole the length of a fishing rod, but somewhat larger and stronger, and fastened a strong cord five or six feet from the small end and another at the extreme point, then securely tied the loose ends of them to the corners of a blanket to be washed, and to the outer corners of that another blanket, and as many shirts or other garments as we cared to wash. By placing rocks around the rod it could be set at any desired angle; or, if a rod was not to be found, we tied the cords to rocks and sunk them in the proper place, which gave the same results, though this sometimes necessitated deep wading. This outfit was placed in

the current of the stream where the water was a foot or more deep, and the different articles floated near the surface, while the water gave them a gentle, undulating motion. Under favorable conditions a washing of this kind was completed in one or two hours. Though we had no facilities for giving our shirts a laundry finish, no Chinaman could more thoroughly wash them. We exercised much care in tying knots and making connections, or we might have been under the necessity of finishing our journey without shirts or blankets.

For several days before leaving our camp at Independence, there was noticed among our animals a mule which was supposed to be about a year old, but very small for that age. Where he came from or how he happened to be with us no one seemed to know. On leaving the frontier he followed us and soon became a general favorite with the boys, for besides his gentle and playful ways, it was found that

he could run faster, jump further and climb higher than any animal in our outfit. Owing to his diminutive size, he was named Tom Thumb, which was soon abbreviated to Tom. When on the march he formed a habit of stopping by the wayside and appropriating to himself such verdure as suited his taste, after which at his best speed he would rush to the head of the column and take his favorite place near the General's bell-horse, of which he was very fond. When crossing the Wind River mountains he sometimes had trouble in working his way around the pack-mules which had passed him while grazing. On one occasion early in the day, as we were carefully making our way along a very dangerous trail on a steep, rocky hillside, Tom, in his hurry to pass a number of pack-mules at a point which was barely wide enough for one mule to pass at a time, was crowded over a mass of rocks, six or eight feet high, alighting on a smooth ledge, which sloped at an angle of sixty or seventy

degrees, and in a twinkling shot down the incline into a small canyon through which a mountain stream was flowing.

To approach the canyon at that point was out of the question, and, had that been possible, we dare not leave the mules we were leading, consequently Tom received no attention, but we supposed it to be the last of him, and during the dinner hour many regrets were expressed over the untimely death of our pet. Judge of our surprise when, after going into camp for the night, Tom came limping in looking for the bell-horse. He was bruised and bleeding from many wounds, and with one ear torn half way off and hanging down over a badly swollen eye, he looked the picture of despair. His wounds were dressed and he was kindly cared for, yet he never fully recovered from the effects of his adventure, but (limping along) managed to accompany the bell-horse to the end of the race.

CHAPTER IX.

Camp on Goose Creek—Discussing the Situation—A Gloomy Outlook—A Forlorn Hope—The Outfit—Taking Leave—Fate of Murdough—Short Rations—A Lonesome Night—A Hot Spring—Wagon Train and Friends—Crossing a Sage Desert—Unwelcome Root Diggers—An Anxious Night—Suffering for Water, Food and Sleep—Robbers of the Humboldt—"Old Mage" the Hero—Jack Rabbit on Toast—Duck Shooting.

Near nightfall on August 15th, we encamped on Goose creek, a small tributary to Lewis fork of the Columbia river, in the southern part of what is now the State of Idaho, and about two hundred miles north of the great

Salt Lake. At the point where we struck the creek there had been a regular camping place, and the grass in that vicinity had all been consumed; but, by moving up the creek a mile or two, excellent grass and ice-cold spring water were found, and we tarried there all of the next day.

The past, present and future of our undertaking was fully discussed, resulting in a discouraging outlook for everything before us. Our animals had not received the benefit from our flank movement that we were led to expect, for, owing to the rocky and gravelly nature of the steep mountain trails, nearly all of them were barefooted and the feet of many of them had become so worn that they were scarcely able to travel.

We supposed ourselves to be not less than eight hundred miles from the valley of the Sacramento, and, considering the condition of many of the animals, could not expect to reach the end of our journey before the first of Octo-

ber. We were about to cross the Great Basin, which was supposed to be almost destitute of timber and game, and where we might expect to find long stretches of dry, barren plains, without water or grass. The General had never ventured into that mysterious region, and knew nothing about the country we were about to enter, so in that respect could be of no further use to us as guide; but where hundreds of wagons had made their way we, with pack-mules, could follow.

With the exception of a small quantity of dried meat, saved from our Green river hunting camp, we had not to exceed ten pounds of provisions to each man. We had eaten nothing but animal food and berries since leaving the Sweet Water, and for the last fifteen days of our march had not tasted salt, the supply of that article having been exhausted. As we were nearing the starvation point, the above considerations suggested to us a division of the party; and, after much

deliberation, it was decided to select five men from the members of the company to act as pioneers and proceed with all possible dispatch to the nearest point where supplies could be obtained and purchase such stores as they should deem best. They were then to procure pack-saddles, load the supplies on their riding animals and return (walking), meeting the company as far back on the road as possible. The following were elected as pioneers, viz.: D. K. Knowls, E. S. Perkins, Stephen Forseth, Fred Carpenter and the writer.

Though regarding the proposed trip a very hazardous undertaking, we commenced at once to make arrangements to start the next morning. We were well aware of the risk of the journey, for, being about to traverse an unexplored desert, our small party would be liable to meet with savage tribes, necessitating eternal vigilance and a constant watch, both by day and night, and we also knew that we were liable to suffer with hunger and perhaps die of

starvation in a region destitute of game, and which was then almost unknown to man.

We were each provided with two hundred dollars in gold, and, in addition to our guns and a good supply of ammunition, our friends persuaded us to accept hunting knives and revolvers till we were about as well armed as the Indian-killer in a dime novel.

Our five pack-mules, with the packs, were to be taken along by the main company and kept with it, and we were disburdened of all articles not absolutely necessary.

The provisions of our party for the eight-hundred-mile trip consisted of ten pounds of Spanish pinoli (parched corn meal sweetened with sugar) and about three pounds of deer tallow.

As we intended, if possible, to make about forty miles per day, we expected to overtake a great many wagon trains, from which it was hoped we would be able to procure supplies enough to keep us from starving.

It being necessary to have riding animals which could be relied on to make long marches, we were given the privilege of making our own selection from the company's entire outfit; but, being so much attached to the saddle animals which had carried us safely from the frontier, we looked upon them as friends and declined exchanging them for those which would probably be no better. But, acting on the advice of the General, we took along a small, tough, hard-footed pony, giving us an extra in case any of the other animals became footsore or otherwise disabled, and after being led one day's march he followed without further trouble.

Our cooking utensils consisted of one large, badly-battered coffee-pot (which had been picked up along the road), two tin cups and a large iron spoon.

We received no specific instructions. "Do as you think best and be quick," was the word.

Being one of the five selected for this forlorn-hope, I regretted being under the necessity of leaving my messmate and intimate friend, S. D. Murdough. Having had a mild attack of mountain fever, he was considerably prostrated, and, as there had been little or no improvement in his condition for several days, he was becoming discouraged and, I feared, somewhat homesick. As he suffered from cold on chilly nights, I gave him the use of my overcoat, and offered him such advice as I was able to give, also assuring him that we would return in the least possible time with supplies, when he would have food better adapted to his condition. I counseled him to maintain a cheerful spirit and to exercise his will in a fight for his former health and strength; but he parted with me as with a friend whom he never expected to see again. On our return to the company my fears were fully realized, for my friend lay buried in the Humboldt valley.

After much hand-shaking and many wishes for success, we left the company a little after daylight and crossed the watershed which separates the waters of the Columbia from those of the Great Basin. From the summit of the dividing ridge, with something akin to dread, tinged with regret, we obtained a distant view of the mysterious and unknown desert which we were about to enter.

After being fifteen hours on the road, we camped on a small creek in the lower foothills of the dividing ridge, near the northern rim of the Great Basin. We had excellent grass for our horses, but water was only to be found in deep pools along the bed of the creek. Many clusters of small willows were growing along the narrow creek bottom. Being very weary after our long march, and not thinking it best to make a fire which might attract Indians, we each stirred about two ounces of pinoli in a pint of cold water and drank the mixture for supper. It proved to be anything

but a satisfying food, but as a cathartic it was a decided success.

We were much disturbed and obtained but little sleep during the night, as our horses, from midnight to near daylight, were nervous and excited, and we had hard work to quiet their fears and save them from stampeding. Whether it were Indians or animals prowling around our camp we never knew. It would not do to say that we were frightened, but, as for myself, I felt as though I should have liked to be further away from those willows.

After our experience of that night with cold water and raw corn meal, we had no appetite for breakfast, and at daylight set forth on our first day's march in the Great Basin. Our trail lay to the south, over a very rolling and barren country.

After eight hours' travel we struck a dry creek, where, among the willows, we found a scanty supply of grass for our horses. We were

weary, hungry and nearly sick. As we had eaten but little food and having had scarcely any sleep for over thirty hours, we felt pretty sober; but, using our coffee-pot as a camp-kettle and water from our canteens, we made a quantity of pinoli porridge, which, after being thoroughly cooked, proved to be both palatable and nutritious. Steve remarked that "it was surprising to see what an amount of cheerfulness could be extracted from a little hot gruel."

After a short rest we resumed our journey, and late in the afternoon found water, where we remained till midnight and again started out. Soon after daylight we discovered smoke some distance ahead, and supposing it to arise from the campfires of travelers, we became anxious and quickened our pace, while we imagined we could almost see the boys of a wagon train, three or four miles away, cooking their breakfast. We were quite disappointed on finding that what we took to be smoke was steam arising from a hot spring in

a deep valley. Near the spring was a number of abandoned wagons and the irons of others which had been burned in making fires, indicating that the place had been a favorite camping ground. We were much pleased at finding smouldered campfires and evidences of a wagon train having occupied the valley the night before. The hot spring was of no mean dimensions, the reservoir being about forty feet in diameter and the estimated depth seven or eight feet. The water was as clear as crystal and the bottom of the reservoir, which could be plainly seen, was a mass of sand and pebbles kept in constant motion by the water, which seemed to be forced up over the entire bottom of the pool. The discharge from the spring was not much below the surrounding surface, which was nearly level. The flow was uniform and at the rate of two or three hundred gallons per minute. This overflow formed a small rivulet, which diminished in volume for about two hundred

yards, where the water disappeared in a bed of gravel and sand. The water from this spring was not boiling hot, though the motion of the water and steam arising from it gave it that appearance. The hand could be held in the water for the space of two or three seconds. Steve said he could "see no use for so large a boiling pot unless we had more meal."

After a breakfast of hot porridge, we started forth, and before noon, by rapid traveling, overtook the wagon train which had camped in the hot-spring valley the night before. We found this wagon company composed of about thirty-five men, who had started from Missouri with nine wagons and forty head of oxen; but at the time we met they were reduced to five wagons and thirty head of oxen. They seemed to be traveling woefully slow, their oxen being footsore and weary; but the men were in good health and quite cheerful, and while they expected to have reached the end of their journey before that time, yet they had

no fears as to the result. We were soon well acquainted and each one had learned something of the other's perils and adventures while on the plains. They had taken but little game along the way, and consequently had drawn heavily on their stores, and were not in condition to sell us supplies; but they gave us a little flour, a few ounces of salt and a small frying-pan, and in addition to the above a tin plate (a much needed article) was added to our stock of tableware.

After a nooning of two or three hours and a dinner of porridge, supplemented by flapjacks seasoned with salt, we bade adieu to our kind friends and traveled till past midnight; but, finding no water or grass, we halted for three or four hours, when we resumed our journey and had the good fortune to strike a camping place a little after sunrise, and after a short rest pushed on again. Our road was across a sage desert. As far as the eye could reach nothing could be seen but the blue sky and a

wilderness of wild sage. The sun was excessively hot and there was not a breath of air in motion. A profound stillness hovered over the landscape and we seemed to travel in a world of sunshine, silence and sage. The only living thing seen during the day was a number of horned toads, and on our march of thirty-five miles we found not a drop of water. A little before dark, being weary, hungry and somewhat discouraged, we selected a camping place in a little valley between two low hills which were clothed with a dense growth of sage. A little strip of grass, near by, furnished a scanty supply of feed for our animals, and a hole scooped out in a moist spot in the earth kept us from suffering for water. The little valley was not to exceed thirty or forty feet in width between the lines of sage. While gathering fuel to cook our supper, two Digger Indians came slipping through the sage into our camp and took their stations near our fire. In less than five minutes two more

made their appearance, and singly and in pairs they continued to come until we had seventeen of them. They were absolutely naked, poor and hungry, and quite in keeping with the character of the country. The average stature of these Root Diggers was not to exceed five feet, and their weight seventy to ninety pounds. Their faces were pinched and care-worn, while the most abject misery seemed stamped on every feature, and we looked upon them as types of humanity in its lowest form. How they managed to support existence in that miserable country, or why they were there, was an unsolved mystery. They ate everything that afforded the least nourishment—roots, seeds, snakes, insects, and, in short, everything that helped to prolong their miserable lives. They were armed with ugly-looking clubs and very inferior bows, with a meager supply of arrows. We could make nothing out of their language, but readily understood by their signs that they were

hungry. We shared our supper with them, and they devoured their food with the voracity of famished wolves. Long after dark our guests, in single file, took their departure up the hill through the sage and we saw no more of them. If this had been a party of Blackfeet or Crow Indians, instead of these puny dwarfs, we might have considered ourselves in a trap; and yet, those war clubs, with the probability of a visit by a larger party some time during the night, was not very conducive to sound sleep. Two of our men, heavily armed, were on guard through the night, but nothing unusual occurred, though we did not feel fully assured of our safety until daylight the next morning, when we resumed our journey early without breakfast, and near noon found a little grass, but no water. Owing to the meager supply of water at our last night's camp, we were unable to fill our canteens in the morning, in consequence of which we suffered from thirst, as did also our animals; but awhile after

dark we were much surprised at striking a small stream of running water and fairly good grass. Here we cooked and ate the last morsel of our food for supper, and, with the exception of one man on guard, we indulged in several hours of refreshing sleep.

We had intended to leave this camp soon after midnight on the morning of the 22d, but our extreme weariness after the forced marches, together with the horses showing signs of failure, held us to that running water till late in the morning. We never traveled faster than a slow walk, and, in order to make forty miles a day, it was necessary to be on the road fifteen or sixteen hours, which, with short rations for both man and beast, was extremely fatiguing, while we also suffered for the want of sleep.

We always had one man, and sometimes two, on watch while the others were sleeping, and this guard duty, which had to be so often repeated, together with our night marches

and lack of food, was rapidly undermining our energy.

One of our mules becoming footsore, the pony was put under the saddle, and "Old Mage" (the mule) was turned loose to follow. He was the finest looking mule in our outfit, yet, notwithstanding his glossy, mouse-colored coat and well-rounded form, he was possessed of a vixenish disposition and was a perfect tyrant among his fellows. While he and his master were the best of friends, he was always on kicking terms with everybody else. With his ears turned wrong side out and his teeth exposed to the weather, both man and beast acknowledged him the champion of the plains.

The terrible solitude which pervaded that desert region was very marked as we left camp that morning with empty stomachs. Our road led down the stream, and we were guessing and more than hoping that it would prove to be the Humboldt river. We traveled perhaps a little faster than usual, being anxious

to overtake a wagon train or find something which could be converted into food. We were continually on the alert for jack-rabbits, having seen signs of them in the green spots along the road.

After seven or eight hours' travel, we were still plodding down the stream, which was growing larger, and beginning to find small bottoms which were backed up by steep, rocky bluffs, giving the creek something of the appearance of a river, and we were almost convinced that it was the Humboldt.

With the exception of two or three short halts for our horses to crop a few blades of grass, we kept steadily on our way, but found nothing to eat and could see no signs of a wagon train being near. The bluffs along the creek bottoms were more pronounced, and sharp spurs from them pushed down to the stream. In a ravine between two of these rocky points we fell in with a party of about twenty Indians, who seemed to be waiting by

the roadside. Their nudity and long, matted hair, discordant voices and hideous looking faces gave them the appearance of being a formidable crew. That they were bent on mischief there was no doubt, and, there being four or five of them to one of us, we watched them very closely, being prepared to meet any demonstration they might offer. The liberal supply of small arms, which our friends had persuaded us to take along, proved to be quite a comfort to us while parleying with these thievish Root Diggers.

As we approached them they commenced begging for something to eat. On finding that we had nothing for them, they began bartering for our footsore mule, which was running loose without halter or bridle; but when they learned that cheap bows and war clubs were not legal tender for mules, and as we were about to move on, they concluded to take "Old Mage" without as much as saying "by your leave," and commenced driving

him up the bed of a dry branch which made into the river at that point, and they succeeded in pulling and pushing him along for a short distance, when he concluded to join our company, and, in freeing himself from his would-be captors, six or eight Indians were knocked down and more or less hurt, while the others were so badly frightened that they made no further demonstration and we moved on unmolested. They were a pack of cowardly thieves and ought to have been shot on sight, but, as "Old Mage" had fought his way out, we left them and went our way, keeping a sharp lookout for robbers of the Humboldt at all points where they might be sheltered and take us by surprise. We traveled far into the night, as we wished to get some distance away from the party of Indians we had left behind, and also to increase our chances of overtaking a wagon train.

It was long after midnight when we halted on a very small stream of running water,

which proved to be a tributary to the Humboldt, and here we tarried till morning. On viewing our surroundings at daylight, we were much disappointed at not finding traces of a wagon train having recently passed, and, as our only hope seemed to be in pushing ahead, we soon had our horses under the saddle; but before starting we discovered two ducks winging their way down the river bottom, and, as they were the first living thing that we had seen for a long time, we began to feel encouraged and were delighted at seeing them drop down in swampy-looking ground only two or three hundred yards from our camp. Fred and I, with our guns loaded for duck, started for the swamp, but we had proceeded only a short distance when a large jack-rabbit hopped out from among the willows, straightening himself up as if taking in the situation. Our anxiety and imagination, re-inforced by our empty stomachs, made that jack-rabbit look to be three or four feet high. Without

the least hesitation, I think we made what modern hunters would call a pot-shot, but we got the rabbit. Returning to camp with our prize, we soon had choice cuts of rabbit cooking from the end of willow sticks, while Perkins produced about a tablespoonful of salt, which he had kept tied up in the corner of a very dirty handkerchief, and we enjoyed a glorious breakfast, with appetites sharpened by hard work and a long fast. Steve declared that "he who had never eaten broiled jack-rabbit, seasoned with salt, knew very little about good living."

The bottom on the west side of the river at this point was very wide, and the high, rocky bluffs, noticed the day before, seemed to have been transformed during our night march into mighty palisades, which were pushed back into a crescent shape, forming an amphitheatre of vast dimensions. There was no further question as to our being on the Humboldt.

It was arranged for Fred and I to canvass four or five miles of the river bottom for ducks, while the balance of the boys were to take our horses along and wait on the road for us to join them. There were many small ponds along the river bottom, on which ducks were sporting, but these little lakelets were all surrounded by a dense growth of brush and reeds, making it difficult to get within shooting distance. We found that ducks were not disposed to set themselves up as shining marks for "pot-hunters," and, not being expert wing-shots, we wasted some precious ammunition. We worked our way down the valley and in the swamps found ducks quite numerous, and, forgetting everything foreign to the "business in hand," enjoyed, for an hour or two, real old-time sport. We arrived at the five-mile limit with six ducks and received the hearty congratulations of our comrades. We were wet from wading through the swamps and bespattered with mud, but we cared little for that,

for in that desert country, where everything seemed hungry, there was a satisfaction in hustling for the crippled duck brought down by a snap-shot, of which he who hunts for pleasure alone knows nothing. After being so pinched with hunger, the capture of a half dozen small ducks made us feel that life was yet worth living and that the world was made to some purpose.

CHAPTER X.

A Favorite Camp Ground—Horses Suffering for Grass—Indian Beggars—Supper With a Wagon Company—A Motley Crew of Mormons—Sleeping in the Saddle—Features of the Humboldt—The Great American Desert—Sink of the Humboldt—A Disappointment—A Stranded Wagon Company—A Continuous March of Thirty-four Hours—Evidences of Extreme Suffering—Sleeping on Guard—Question for a Class in Geology—Echo Canyon—A Wreck.

With the ducks, which we had taken from the swamps, hanging from our saddles, we pushed on down the valley and entered a region of ashes, cinders and volcanic rocks, where there was not a trace of vegetation. On our left, across the river, was a low range of

sterile mountains, which formed the backing to the river bottom, while on our right the solid rock wall, noticed in the morning, continued with increasing ruggedness.

About four o'clock p. m. we came to an old camp ground where once had been a little grass, but for us there was not a vestige left, though a small patch of sage, near by, furnished fuel for cooking. There two of our ducks, which had been plucked as we walked along the road, were hurriedly cooked for supper, when we again moved on, intending to travel until we found grass for our horses; but awhile after midnight, having found nothing but desert, we halted, tied our animals to rocks, posted a guard and indulged in a little sleep. At daylight there was nothing to do but take to the road again. We shortly came to a creek in which there was running water, and near by a camp ground which looked as though every company on the road had occupied it, for in the vicinity every blade of grass

had been consumed. As our animals were suffering from hunger, we moved out towards the bluffs a mile or more, where was found good bunch-grass, and from boiled duck and duck soup we made an excellent breakfast.

Our camp being on a well worn Indian trail leading down through a break in the bluffs, with sheltering rocks all around us, we felt quite nervous and did not care to remain as marks for Indian arrows any longer than necessary to give our horses the benefit of the grass which they so much needed. We traveled rapidly down the river (if two and a half miles an hour can be called rapid traveling) and about the middle of the afternoon halted at a place which afforded a little grass, and there we finished the last of our ducks and started on again, but camped before dark in a grass plat where our horses grazed while we slept several hours, resuming our journey about midnight.

It seemed to be the plan of those Humboldt

Indians to lie in wait at the camping places along the river for what they could beg or steal from travelers who occupied them. At one of those places, the next morning, we found a party of Indian beggars. That they were hungry there was no question, and, judging by their looks, they had always been hungry. Their nakedness, dwarfed bodies and careworn expression excited our sympathy, while it was out of our power to offer them anything to appease their hunger.

At that point were found the irons of several wagons which had been left and the woodwork burned in making campfires. Much of the woodwork from abandoned wagons along the road was carried away by the Indians, but they seemed to care nothing for the iron, as we noticed quantities of it lying around in all the principal camping places. There were indications that this camp had been recently occupied, and we tried to learn something about it from the Indians, but in answer to our signs they

only shook their heads and looked at each other with a puzzled expression. As we were about to leave, Perkins presented one of the Indians with an old pocketknife, but this only made them more persistent in their begging, for they followed us quite a distance, holding out their hands in a very beseeching manner.

Along in the afternoon we were somewhat excited by discovering canvas-topped wagons some distance down the river, and before night had overtaken them. They belonged to a company of men from Wisconsin, who had traveled all the way from that State with ox teams. In answer to our inquiries for provisions, we were told that their Captain, who was in advance looking for a camping place, was the only person authorized to sell or give away stores. We learned that they, like ourselves, after making a late start, had been detained by sickness, and, having taken but little game along the road, their supplies were about exhausted, while their oxen, in their

poor and footsore condition, were barely able to travel. We shortly overtook the Captain, who was riding a very discouraged looking mule, and soon became acquainted, which was very natural in that lonesome and dreary country. The Captain invited us to spend the night in his camp, where he would have an ox killed and give us a portion of the meat, and we were more than glad to accept the proffered boon. A camp being selected and teams driven in, a poor, bony, footsore ox was singled out, shot and dressed, and we were soon eating supper with appetites which made that dry beef better than any porterhouse steak ever eaten by an epicure in a civilized country. Of material from the head of that poor ox we made during the night a gallon of excellent soup, which we took along in our canteens, and from a portion of the skin made "Old Mage" a Mexican moccasin for his crippled foot. After taking supper and breakfast with the Captain, he gave us a

few pounds of beef to take on the road. Being ready to start at daylight the next morning, we bade our kind friends adieu and resumed the journey, and never saw nor heard of any of them afterwards. After a long and tiresome day, we camped about 10 o'clock p. m. where there was excellent grass for our horses.

About daybreak we were aroused by the guard, who had discovered campfires which seemed to be only a short distance away. Supposing that to mean a wagon train, we moved out without waiting for breakfast, as we desired to reach the camp before the train started on the road. We were surprised at finding all the wagons heading up the stream, but soon learned that we had met a party of Mormons on their way from California to the Mormon settlement near the great Salt Lake. They proved to be a motley crew. There were not only old men and old women, young men and young women, but a complete assortment of children of all sizes and ages.

From this people we obtained much valuable information in regard to the road, camping places and the distance to certain points. We also learned that we were within twenty-five miles of the sink of the Humboldt, and that we would be under the necessity of making a long stretch of sixty miles across a sandy plain, which lay between the sink of the Humboldt and the next watering place. We were advised to water our horses and fill our canteens from the river at least ten miles above the sink, and give that wonder of the world a wide berth, as the water near the sink was so strongly impregnated with alkali that it was absolutely poisonous, while the grass in the vicinity, owing to the overflow in the wet season, was encrusted with potash and unfit for grazing. The Mormons held out many inducements for us to accompany them to Salt Lake and spend the winter, but we declined, with thanks. As they would follow our trail as far as Bear river and were certain to meet

our company, it gave us an opportunity of notifying them as to our progress and prospects. We subsequently learned that our message was properly delivered and that the Mormons sold our company four head of beef cattle, though at many times their actual value. Being about to resume the journey, our Mormon friends presented us with four or five pounds of flour, a pint of rice and a very small quantity of salt. In addition to a drove of cattle which they were taking with them, their wagons were heavily loaded with goods and provisions, but they flatly refused to sell us supplies at any price.

In considering the enfeebled condition of ourselves and animals at that time, we had some misgivings as to our ability to make a continuous march of sixty miles across a hot, sandy region without water or grass, though a very tempting and encouraging feature of the undertaking was the promise of excellent grass and water after crossing the sand plain,

or, as the Mormons called it, the great American desert. In order to spare our animals, we walked many miles every day, but found it very fatiguing, which, together with the loss of sleep and insufficient food, seemed to be gradually wearing us out, while our riding animals were growing poor and liable to fail us at any time.

We were almost afraid to ride for fear of falling from the saddle while sleeping. David, one of our party, who, for the want of proper food, had become prostrated, was continually growing weaker, and, at that time, unable to mount his horse without help.

Though the future looked gloomy and uncertain, yet knowing that the lives of ourselves and of our friends in the rear depended, to a great extent, on the accomplishment of our object, we banished all doubts of final success and plodded along, consoling ourselves with the knowledge that every mile gained brought us nearer our journey's end.

We arrived at the last camping place on the Humboldt by three o'clock p. m., and, after watering our horses and filling our canteens, we moved out about a mile towards the bluffs, where we found good grass and managed, by burning dry weeds, to cook an allowance of food to last us across the desert.

Although we were anxious as to the result of the next two or three days' travel, yet we welcomed the prospect of leaving the Humboldt and its dreary valley behind.

The reader should not imagine the Humboldt to be a rapid mountain stream, with its cool and limpid waters rushing down the rocks of steep inclines, with here and there beautiful cascades and shady pools under mountain evergreens, where the sun never intrudes and where the speckled trout loves to sport. While the water of such a stream is fit for the gods, that of the Humboldt is not good for man nor beast. With the exception of a short distance near its source, it has the least perceptible cur-

rent. There is not a fish nor any other living thing to be found in its waters, and there is not timber enough in three hundred miles of its desolate valley to make a snuff-box, or sufficient vegetation along its banks to shade a rabbit, while its waters contain the alkali to make soap for a nation, and, after winding its sluggish way through a desert within a desert, sinks, disappears and leaves inquisitive man to ask how, why, when and where?

On August 26th, after watering our horses, filling the canteens, and also our coffeepot, which was carried by turns, we were off at break of day, and by noon were fairly launched upon a vast sea of mingled ashes and sand, which was so compact that our animals, in traveling over it, rarely left a footprint, while the burning rays of the sun reflected from the smooth surface made the heat almost unbearable. We were crossing the bed of an ancient lake which seemed to the eye to be absolutely level. It was seventy miles long and sixty

miles wide, and nowhere on its surface was seen a trace of vegetable or animal life. In some long past age this lake received the waters of the Humboldt, Carson and Walker rivers, but, by some unaccountable change of levels, the rivers found other outlets, and this arid waste added another mystery to that mysterious region.

On arriving at the sink of the Humboldt, a great disappointment awaited us. We had known nothing of the nature of that great wonder except what we had been told by those who knew no more about it than ourselves. In place of a great rent in the earth, into which the waters of the river plunged with a terrible roar (as pictured in our imagination), there was found a mud lake ten miles long and four or five miles wide, a veritable sea of slime, a "slough of despond," an ocean of ooze, a bottomless bed of alkaline poison, which emitted a nauseous odor and presented the appearance of utter desolation. The croaking

of frogs would have been a redeeming feature of the place, but no living thing disturbed the silence and solitude of the lonely region. There were mysteries and wonders hovering over and around the sink of the Humboldt, but there was neither beauty nor grandeur in connection with it, for a more dreary or desolate spot could not be found on the face of the earth.

For several miles around the lake there was a low, sandy plain, which was nearly on a level with the lake itself and subject to overflow during the wet season, as evidenced by the large deposits of crystalized potash left on the surface after the water subsided.

The valley of the Humboldt, lying between two mountain ranges, was extremely hot during the summer, and, there being no rainfall in that country for a period of eight months of the year, the question arose in our minds whether absorption and evaporation might not solve the mystery of the sinking of the Humboldt.

Sometime after midnight we discovered a bright fire in the direction we were traveling, and, as it appeared to be a great way off, we took it for granted that it was on Carson river, just beyond the desert. We were highly elated at the prospect of shaking off this desert so early, and to relieve our thirst we drew on our canteens quite freely, which was afterwards regretted.

It was daylight when we arrived at the fire, where was found several wagons but no animals of any description, while the same trackless waste reached out in all directions. The reader can imagine how keen was our disappointment when a solitary man, who had charge of the camp, informed us that we were yet twenty miles from water. We had traveled twenty-four hours without a halt, and, in order to spare our animals, the most of the way had been made on foot, and, being extremely hungry, thirsty and weary, we were sorely disappointed. The wagons belonged to

a company from Missouri, who, after thirty hours' travel from the Humboldt, found their oxen so exhausted as to be unable to take the wagons through, and, in order to save them, they were unyoked and driven to the river, where they were being herded until sufficiently recruited to be taken back for the wagons.

Perkins was selected to solicit this lone man for supplies, and, for a bright five-dollar gold piece, he secured about four quarts of flour, a pint of rice and a pinch or two of salt. In justice to the many kind persons who furnished the supplies which kept us from starving by the wayside, I will state that the man who had charge of those wagons was the only person who accepted money for provisions. We never passed a single company without being made welcome to such supplies as could be spared from their scanty stores, which speaks well for the noble, free-hearted souls that crossed the plains in forty-nine. Halting at this point but a few minutes, we hurried on,

and after a continuous march of thirty-four hours, during which time we suffered with hunger, thirst and heat, we arrived at the river about 3 o'clock p. m. On the last twenty miles of our march we passed the skeletons of many animals which had perished before they could reach the water. Oxen died with their yokes still on them, while horses and mules lay dead in their harness, and property of all kinds, even bedding, was scattered along the road. Wagons, from which their canvas tops had not been removed, were shrinking in the hot sun, with the tires ready to fall from their wheels. Oxen, after making a desperate fight for their lives, perished within a mile of the river, while everything along the road gave evidence of there having been terrible suffering by both man and beast.

Dinner being disposed of, we began to look around to see what we could find for our horses, but it seemed as though all travelers who had crossed the desert camped down as

soon as they struck the river, and consequently there was not a particle of grass anywhere in the vicinity; and, as our animals were starving, we moved up the river two or three miles, where we forded the stream, and on a rich bottom, among the tussock willows, there was splendid grazing

It fell to my lot to guard the camp till midnight, and, without loss of time, the other boys threw themselves under their blankets and were asleep in a trice. With a blanket over my shoulders, fastened at the throat with a wooden pin, and with two revolvers and my gun ready for immediate use, I was equipped for several hours of lonely and weary watch. There was yet an hour of daylight, and in my exhausted condition I could see no necessity of walking a regular beat (as was the rule) before sundown, at least, and, in order to take a few minutes' rest, I seated myself on the ground, with my gun lying across my lap, while my back was supported by a thick cluster of

willows. The next morning, just as the sun was showing his face over the tops of the mountains which lay to the east, I awoke with a start. I was not long in mastering the situation. I had slept all night and the other boys were still sleeping, while our mules and horses, which were near by, seemed oblivious to everything on earth.

Following up Carson river, we encamped, a while after dark on August 31st, near the point where the river came rushing through one of the highest ridges in the Sierra-Nevada mountains, by the way of Echo canyon.

The class in geology will please stand up and tell us how many thousands of years it has taken this little river to cut its way to a depth of three thousand feet for a distance of seven miles through this noble mountain, and also tell us how many millions of tons of earth and eroded rock have been carried away by the waters of this insignificant stream.

As our road lay through the canyon, we

entered it early in the morning, and, after crossing the river seventeen times in traveling six miles, we arrived about noon at a point near the head of the canyon, where the immense rocks which had fallen from above made it almost impossible to get wagons through. Here we found two young men who hailed from Missouri, and who had left home with two yoke of small oxen and an old wagon which was quite unfit for such a journey, as it broke down before they got through the Rocky mountains; but, using the larger wheels of the wagon, they fitted up a cart which served them until they struck the mass of rocks at that point, where it was completely wrecked. Without hesitating a moment, they commenced packing their oxen with their effects and were soon ready for the road again. For protection, these boys had kept along with a large company of wagoners, and were then hurrying to overtake them. In answer to our inquiries for supplies, they

offered to share with us a very meager store, but, as our larder was good for another meal, we declined the generous gift.

We passed from the canyon into a narrow valley between two high, parallel ranges of mountains. Our animals having had but little to eat for over thirty hours, we moved up the valley off the road, and among the immense rocks, which in past ages had rolled down the steep mountainside, they found a scanty supply of grass, while we, under a large, scrubby cedar, whose low, drooping branches formed a perfect shade, rested for a couple of hours. We encamped at night close by a company of wagoners, who gave us a few pounds of foot-sore beef.

Our road on September 2d led south down the valley between the high ridges, but along in the afternoon it turned abruptly to the right, and through a depression in the ridge, by what old mountaineers would call an easy trail, we crossed the second barrier and camped

for the night on the border of a small lake of pure water, at the base of the highest and last mountain to be crossed, for beyond the summit lay the promised land. As it was very cold and fuel being abundant, we kept a rousing fire through the night, for our blankets afforded but little protection from the extreme cold of that high altitude, where water froze every night.

CHAPTER XI.

The Highest Point—Serious Reflections—Webber Town—Among the Miners—Primitive Mining Tools—The Miner's Bill of Fare—Cape Horners—Market Report—Sacramento City—Dinner Under a Roof—Selling a Ship at Auction—Returning With Supplies—Magnificent Scenery—A Happy Meeting.

About noon on September 3rd, after a climb of over six hours, we arrived at the summit of the pass over the highest range of the Sierra-Nevada mountains. On reaching the summit of that vast pile, and being surrounded by the solitude and silence peculiar to high altitudes, we stood gazing down into the beautiful Sacramento valley, where we hoped to end

our journey and our sufferings. For some little time not a word was spoken, and I imagine we all felt as one coming in sight of home after a long absence and a perilous journey. This pass, which is ten thousand and five hundred feet above sea level, is the highest point ever reached by any wagon road in our country, and, though scaling the mountain with wagons was a difficult task, yet a limited number of them were taken across and, in a worn and battered condition, sent down into the mines, where they were looked upon by Cape Horners as relics of civilization.

Of the thousands of wagons which left the frontier the wreckage of most of them might have been found in the camping places between the Platte river and the foot of this mountain. After a short halt, in order to enjoy the grandeur and beauty of our surroundings, we moved rapidly down towards the Sacramento, and at night slept under the red woods.

The next morning, after cooking and eating

the last of our food for breakfast, we were off early, for we expected to reach the mining camps sometime during the day. Our road led down steep slopes among the scattering live-oaks and tall pines. About sundown we passed a number of well-constructed brush huts, and there were indications of them having been recently occupied; but, there being no water or grass in the vicinity, we moved on, hoping to find something to appease our extreme hunger, and, two hours after dark, having found nothing for ourselves or animals, we came to a grove of small birch saplings on the gentle slope of a hill, and there, with our horses tied to the trees, we encamped for the night.

Early next morning we discovered a man at work in a ravine at the foot of the hill on which we had spent the night, and learned from him that we were close to Webber Creek mines, and that a short distance away we should find a wagon store, where we could

buy supplies of all kinds. With our coffee-pot and canteens we visited the peddler's wagon, and from stores there purchased we prepared an excellent breakfast, and for the time being our craving for molasses, vinegar and salt was fully appeased. The amount of food consumed at that breakfast seemed to be measured more by the capacity of our stomachs than by our appetites, for, after having been so long pinched with hunger, the appetite never seemed satisfied.

There being no grass in the vicinity of our camp, it was arranged for Steve and me to take the animals a mile or two down the valley, and, by agreement, Steve was to lead one of the mules while I drove the others after him. As we were ready to set out, Steve, noticing three flapjacks which had been left from breakfast, remarked that, as they were seasoned with salt and swimming in molasses, he didn't propose to get two miles from them, and seizing them he started, carrying the plate in one hand and

leading a mule with the other. After fifteen minutes' travel, Steve called me to come and help him, as he was having trouble with the flapjacks. On joining him I found that the hot sun to which the molasses had been exposed caused it to overflow the plate, and Steve, in order to protect his clothing, was holding it at arm's length, with the molasses trickling down between his fingers, while he was lamenting over the loss of so much sweetness. Seating ourselves on a rock, we took good care that there should be no further waste of ready-made luxuries, leaving the empty plate on the rock.

A temporary shelter was constructed for David, one of our party, as it was arranged for him to remain at that place until our return, in order to recruit his health, as he was still suffering from the effects of improper food. We spent the afternoon viewing Webber town and among the miners along the creek. The town at that early day consisted of about a

dozen small tents and several covered wagons, one of which was known as "The Store," while quite a large log house was being constructed for a hotel. The rainy season not yet having set in, many of the miners were cooking and eating in the open air, while their only shelter for the night were very rudely constructed brush huts. We formed the acquaintance of two young men (late arrivals) who were partners in mining. The only washer they were as yet able to procure was a four-quart tin pan, with which one of them separated the gold from the dirt, while the other, with a very small pick which seemed admirably adapted to the work, was supplying the pan with a limited quantity of pay dirt from pockets and crevices among the rocks; but with that primitive outfit they claimed to be making twenty dollars each per day.

We noticed that only a small amount of dirt could be taken from the bar on which these men were working, but later we learned

that placer diggings, creek and river bars were composed of about four parts of rock and one of pay dirt, and to extract it from among the compact mass of water-worn, globular-shaped rocks of all sizes required patience, time and labor. The most of the miners were using pans ten to fifteen inches in diameter, and they reported their profits at ten to fifty cents to the pan.

The rocker, which in shape and size resembled the old-fashioned infant's cradle, was just being introduced and was a great improvement over the pan. It was rather a plain affair and easily made, though it was worth at that time from forty to fifty dollars. A carpenter, with good tools and suitable lumber at hand, could make two or three of them in a day; but when we considered the fact that wages were from twelve to twenty dollars per day, and that the lumber, after being rived from red-wood logs with much labor, had to be shaved and dressed with such tools as could

be had in the mines, while a piece of sheet iron, sixteen inches square, required for each rocker, was ready sale at five dollars, the price seemed quite reasonable. Another machine, called the "long tom," was worked by some of the miners, but they soon dropped out of use, as they proved to be poor separators, leaving their tailings very rich.

The principal food of the miners at that time consisted of stewed beans and flapjacks; and they were generally served twenty-one times a week, though the latter occasionally gave place to flour dumplings, boiled in clear water and eaten with molasses, the whole forming the most indigestible combination that could well be imagined; consequently many a miner, after a brief stay, left California for his home with more dyspepsia than gold. Those who were tinctured with scurvy, resulting from their long journey across the plains or a voyage around Cape Horn, by the advice of physicians, were adding to their bill

of fare such luxuries as onions at two dollars per pound and vinegar at a dollar a pint. Pepsin, pills and epsom salts were in active demand and sold at fabulous prices.

We left that pleasant camp early on the morning of September 6th for Sutter's Fort, or, as it is now called, Sacramento City, for supplies to take back to our company, having learned that they could not be obtained at any nearer point.

Two days' march from Webber creek brought us to a point on the American river, three miles from Sacramento City. We met a great many Cape Horners on their way to the mines. The most of them were on foot and carrying their camping outfit on their backs. As they had been from four to six months on shipboard, with very limited space in which to exercise, they found walking and carrying a pack extremely fatiguing; but, as they were puffed up with prospective wealth, they were sure to overcome all difficulties.

Early next morning we moved down to the city, where we purchased and packed our animals with fourteen hundred pounds of supplies, and soon after dark were back in the camp we had occupied the night before. "Old Mage" was packed with three hundred pounds of barley, which was fed to our animals on the return trip. Having been very busy preparing our packs, it was past one o'clock p. m. before we could leave the work for dinner, though our stomachs had notified us of our hunger for an hour or two.

We were directed to what was said to be the best "feeding place" in the city. Over the main entrance was painted on white canvas, in large letters, "City Hotel." On inquiring the price of meals, the landlord informed us that the regular rate was five dollars, but remarked that, "as there were four of us and it being past the dinner hour, he would feed our party for an ounce. An ounce of gold-dust in California at that time was rated equal to

sixteen dollars in coin, though, if reasonably clean, its intrinsic value was more than eighteen dollars. There was no paper money in circulation, and the coin of the country was nearly all absorbed by gamblers who found it best adapted to their business.

Though gold-dust was about the only circulating medium, yet he who possessed it could buy anything from a fifty-cent cigar to a ten-thousand-dollar corner lot in any of the prospective capitals of California.

While dinner was being prepared we improved the opportunity in examining the construction of the hotel building, which we estimated to be thirty feet long and about twelve feet wide. Pine strips, one by three inches, nailed together, formed the frame, and it was covered with the cheapest of calico. Eighteen or twenty feet of the front end was used as a dining-room, while the balance was curtained off for a kitchen. This being the first roof under which we had eaten for several

months, we enjoyed the novelty of the situation. The proprietor apologized for the close quarters in which he was doing business, and informed us that previous to leaving New York he had shipped a building ("knocked down") around Cape Horn, for a hotel, but up to that time it had not arrived. Our dinner consisted of navy bread, stewed beans, fresh salmon, raw onions, molasses, boiled potatoes, river water and tea. I may here remark that a year later, at the City Hotel (a large frame building), excellent meals were furnished for one dollar. In commenting on our dinner, Steve remarked that "though the price seemed pretty steep, yet he was doubtful whether the landlord realized any net profit from our patronage."

Risking my reputation for veracity, I will name the prices which we paid for supplies: Flour, \$18.00 per hundred; rice, 45c per pound; sugar, 30c; potatoes, 20c; onions, \$1.00; beans, 23c; tea, \$3.50; barley, 16c; cooking soda,

\$1.00; salt, 22c; black molasses, \$3.50 per gallon; vinegar, which was in active demand as a remedy for scurvy, was selling at \$1.25 per quart. Round-pointed shovels sold at \$20.00 each; square-pointed shovels, \$1.50; miners' picks, \$16.00 each; Cape Horn picks (not adapted to mining), \$1.00. Carpenters were being offered \$16.00 to \$25.00 per day to work at their trade, and common laborers were in demand at \$200 per month, but they all seemed to think that princely fortunes were awaiting them in the mines and declined working for wages. Men with teams were asking \$30 to \$40 per day for hauling goods to the mines, and they were well patronized.

We were deeply interested in the make-up of Sacramento City, which, in a year after our visit, became the capital of the State of California. There was not a complete frame building in the place at that time, though there were a number in course of construction, but there were tents and canvas houses of all

sorts and sizes. They were occupied as stores, hotels, boarding houses, gambling and drinking saloons. Gamblers were plying their vocation with a persistency worthy of a better cause, and where shelter was not to be had games were being worked in the open air.

We noticed a Mexican lad exhibiting his superior horsemanship and skill in throwing the lasso. He had a small dog, which probably had been trained for the business, for the dog and horse seemed to understand each other. While both were at their best speed, the boy never failed to capture the dog by the neck with the lasso. The rider also plucked his hat from the ground while his pony was on a dead run. He invited any of the bystanders to place a coin on his handkerchief which he had spread on the ground, and, without his pony slacking speed in the least, he would secure the coin. This at the present time might be considered a very tame affair, but for us, who knew nothing of horsemanship

except what we had experienced in crossing the plains, it was quite interesting.

A number of ships, which had fought their way around Cape Horn, were lying at anchor in the Sacramento and discharging their cargoes on the bank of the river. Hundreds of men, who had just arrived in the country and were preparing to go to the mines, were loading wagons and packing broken-down horses and mules with their winter stores.

A crowd of men had gathered around a large box, on which stood a young man expatiating on the good qualities of the ship *Strafford*, which lay at anchor in the stream, with an auctioneer's flag displayed from her main yard. The young man, who seemed to be a novice in the business, was about to sell the ship at auction to the highest bidder, and finally succeeded in knocking her off for eight hundred dollars. She probably cost not less than six thousand. Nearly all of the Cape Horn companies disbanded on arriving at their

destination, and many of their ships were sold for almost nothing, while not a few were left at anchor in the harbor of San Francisco, where they became worm-eaten and foul with barnacles, and were finally condemned by inspectors as being unseaworthy.

Three days of hard work in walking and driving loaded mules brought us back to Webber creek, where we found David much improved in health and ready to help us climb the Sierra-Nevada on the return to our company. We slowly worked our way up the steep mountain, and about noon on the fifth day from Webber creek we partook of a cold lunch on the very summit of the highest ridge of the Sierras, and at the same time enjoyed the best bird's-eye view of grand mountain scenery to be had anywhere in this country. We were in excellent spirits, our voracious appetites having surrendered to full and wholesome rations, and we were in condition to enjoy the immensity of the sur-

roundings. Away to the north could be seen the snow-capped summit of conical peaks, while to the south immense ridges, with their canyons, gorges and lakelets, continued until lost to view in the distance. To the west a dense haze obstructed the vision, and it looked as though one might step off into space, while the east revealed to our gaze a continuous mass of rocks, cliffs and mountains which seemed to be thrown together in utter confusion.

Here, where ox teams drew wagons over the crest, we were more than five thousand feet higher than the crator of Mt. Vesuvius, and nearly as high as the summit of Mt. Etna, while the snow-crowned peaks of this immense pile still reached heavenward..

Let him visit the mountains of Europe who will, and climb the Alps, and explore the Appennines, but here within our own boundaries he may find a greater than the Alps, while the Appennines are as pigmies compared to this

majestic upheavel. Nowhere in all Europe will our tourist find a mightier range of grand old mountains, with loftier peaks or deeper canyons. Nowhere will he find more magnificent rocks, beautiful natural parks or verdant vales. Nowhere will he find more sublime waterfalls or finer mountain lakes. Nowhere in Europe will he find mammoth trees three hundred feet high, surrounded by precipitous rocks reaching three thousand feet above them. Nowhere will he find sunnier skies, or a greater wealth of primitive plants mantled in gorgeous bloom. Nowhere in Europe will he find the equal of our geysers, hot and boiling springs, mud lakes, great deserts, natural meadows and lost rivers.

We were all the afternoon working our way down the eastern slope of the mountain, camping at night for the second time on the border of the little lake previously mentioned, where a good fire through the night hardly kept us from suffering with cold. During the night

ice again formed on the surface of the lake and the morning was chilly, with heavy frost.

We continued our return journey as fast as our heavily laden animals could be forced along, and on September 20th, about an hour after dark, at a point on Carson river, within a few rods of where we had enjoyed the best night's sleep of our lives, we were hailed by a familiar voice, and there, encamped among the tussock willows, we found our starving company. The joy which followed the meeting may be imagined, but never described.

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